

Plaintiff offers Simpson compromise

SANTA MONICA (AP) — Fred Goldman offered Wednesday to give up all claims to O.J. Simpson's money in exchange for a signed, detailed confession to be broadcast and published across the United States. "I don't want to play games," Mr. Goldman, father of murder victim Ronald Goldman, told the Associated Press in a telephone interview. "But if he wanted to sign a confession with all the details of his crime and broadcast it all over the country and publish it all over the nation, I would drop the judgment." Mr. Goldman said, adding, "All I ever wanted is justice. It's never been an issue about money." Calls left for Mr. Simpson's attorneys were not immediately returned. Mr. Goldman first issued the challenge Tuesday during an interview on Salem Radio network, a Dallas-based, Christian talk network. "There was a talk show host here in L.A. that offered an idea yesterday on air and I'm going to steal it from him," Mr. Goldman told radio host Mark Giltman on the Alan Keyes show.

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Israeli annexation of Arab East Jerusalem is null and void, Crown Prince affirms

Prince Hassan, French leaders discuss peace process, Islam, regional economic development, socio-economic security and bilateral relations

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday described Israel's unilateral annexation of Arab East Jerusalem as "null and void" and said Jordan's position on the political status of the Holy City was based on international law.

The Crown Prince, speaking to French journalists after talks with French President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Alain Juppe, Parliament Speaker Philippe Seguin, also reaffirmed Jordan's position that the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq should not be tampered with, and any change of government in Baghdad was an affair of the Iraqi people.

The Crown Prince, who arrived in Paris on Tuesday along with Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, discussed with the French leaders the Middle East peace process, regional security, Jordanian-French relations, and the Kingdom's development process.

He expressed high appreciation of the European Union's (EU) contribution to the peace process along

with all other parties concerned and said the quest for peace should be coupled with efforts to establish "soft security" for all people based on socio-economic justice.

He also underlined that the Islamic faith should not be identified with terror and the need to fight "Islamophobia" in the West.

Just as there is no "Christian terror" or "Jewish terror," there is no "Islamic terror," said the Crown Prince, adding there should also be no East-West divide on ethnic lines based on religion and faith.

The Crown Prince, who also met with Arab ambassadors in France and leaders of the French Jewish community, emphasised the need to develop a regional mechanism to address issues of common concern to the countries of the Middle East. He said such a mechanism should replace the present trend to discuss issues on bilateral bases.

In their talks with the Crown Prince, President Chirac, Prime Minister Juppe and Speaker Seguin said France highly appreciated Jordan's key role and contribution to the Middle East peace process and was



keen to consolidate Franco-Jordanian relations in all areas.

On the bilateral front, the Crown Prince, who is visiting France at the invitation of Prime Minister Juppe, discussed Jordanian-French economic ties and an ongoing process of swapping Jordanian debts to France into investments in the Kingdom.

Also emphasised during the meetings was the need to reactivate peace negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks and the conviction that no peace would be comprehensive in the Middle East without Israel, Syria and

Lebanon reaching peace agreements.

The Crown Prince and the French leaders discussed the status of negotiations between Jordan and the European Union on an association agreement, which, according to EU officials, could be signed in April, allowing Jordan to receive preferential treatment in European markets as well as European help to modernise its industrial and marketing base.

The Crown Prince referred to the series of economic legislation enacted in Jordan to make an investment-friendly climate in the Kingdom, which, he said, is seeking strategic international partners in telecommunications, the cement industry and projects related to the Dead Sea.

Prince Hassan particularly noted Jordan's commitment to giving the private sector the leading role in economic activities and the process of privatisation of state entities already undertaken by the government.

The Crown Prince underlined that "the stability of Jordan is important to the entire Middle East region



Abeer Al Oheidi, 27, one of the 30 Palestinian women prisoners released from an Israeli prison early Wednesday, speaks to reporters outside the headquarters of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat shortly after being released (Reuters photo)

Israel, PNA agree on debts after Palestinian women prisoners freed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — An Israeli-Palestinian committee on economic affairs reached agreement on Wednesday for each side to repay debts to the other amounting to more than \$50 million, Israeli officials said.

The decision came a few hours after Israel released 30 Palestinian women prisoners in line with last month's Hebron agreement.

The joint economic committee was established earlier in the week at a summit between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Israel will pay the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) some \$30 million in taxes collected from Palestinians, an amount considerably less than the \$1 billion the authority had originally said it was owed, said an official with the Israeli finance ministry.

In return, the Palestinians have agreed to pay debts to Israeli companies amounting to more than \$20 million, the official said.

The Palestinian debts include those with Israeli hospitals, the state-run telephone company and other public firms.

The amount Israel owed the Palestinians accumulated from taxes levied by Israel on products sold to Palestinians in the territories before those areas were granted self-rule.

Palestinian International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath had in a report in the Al Ayyam newspaper said the authority would request any Israeli payment offer that was less than \$1 billion.

Such paybacks from the Jewish state are outlined in the Paris economic

agreement signed by the two sides in 1994, Mr. Shaath told the Palestinian daily.

Mr. Shaath and Israeli Finance Minister Dan Meridor were heading the joint committee.

The economic committee must also tackle the issues of Israel's closure of the Palestinian areas and the establishment of joint industrial parks.

Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat had announced the formation of eight joint committees to implement the Jan. 15 Hebron accord and continue the peace process.

Mr. Meridor said Wednesday that an economic agreement with the Palestinians meant the opening of a "new page" in economic relations between the sides.

President Arafat on Wednesday hugged and kissed Palestinian women released from Israeli jails hours earlier in an emotional West Bank homecoming.

The women flashed victory signs as they came off a bus at 2 a.m. (2400 GMT) in Ramallah and fell into the arms of loved ones, witnesses said. They were quickly surrounded by around 200 relatives and friends.

Israel released 30 women late on Tuesday from the Sharon and Neve Tirza prisons after the high court rejected a last-minute petition to keep nine of them behind bars.

A final inmate scheduled for release was to be freed on Wednesday. Two of the prisoners were convicted killers.

The women were brought directly to Ramallah, where Mr. Arafat had been waiting for hours.

"The prisoner release process was very difficult but it is living proof of the possibility of coexistence between

Israelis and Palestinians," said Jibril Rajoub, the head of Palestinian preventive security who spent 17 years in an Israeli jail.

"It showed that the Israeli government was serious in its commitment to release the prisoners," he told reporters.

An Israeli group had asked the court to halt the release of the nine, saying they were arrested after the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreements and were not eligible for freedom. Israel committed to release women prisoners in its 1995 peace deal with PLO.

Three of the women slated for release had already been freed but the others refused to leave prison until authorities allowed all 31 to go free.

Police detained two right-wing activists protesting against the release outside the Sharon prison, witnesses said. The women all signed commitments to refrain from violence.

Lamya Maarouf, a 32-year-old Brazilian citizen, was the first woman released from the prison in Tel Mond at around 4 p.m. (1400 GMT). Israeli and Palestinian officials said she was deported to Brazil. Ms. Maarouf was arrested in 1986 for driving the car in which an Israeli soldier was kidnapped and later killed.

Palestinian sources say around 5,000 Palestinians remain in Israeli jails.

"The struggle will continue because there are many young, old and sick people still in prison," said Abeer Al Oheidi, 27, arrested in 1992 for leading a PLO cell which killed a Jewish settler from the Ofra settlement in the West Bank.

"I'm proud to be on free Palestinian land," she shouted.

Netanyahu says U.S. cannot force Syria to talks, assails plan for Saudi F-16 deal

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that the United States cannot force Syria to resume peace talks with Israel and he criticised Washington's reported plan to sell F-16 fighters to Saudi Arabia.

"The United States cannot make Syria negotiate. If the Syrians want peace they will resume the talks. If they don't want peace, they will find a hundred excuses not to launch the talks," Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli Radio on his flight to Washington, where he is to meet U.S. President Bill Clinton on Thursday.

Mr. Netanyahu also said he would not present a "precise peace plan with Syria but general principles" when he talks with Mr. Clinton at the White House.

A series of discussions between Israeli and Syrian military officials held since the official negotiations ended last February have not yielded any concrete results.

The Israeli leader also criticised reported U.S. plans to sell 100 F-16 warplanes to Saudi Arabia.

"We consider this sale a very serious decision because by equipping Saudi Arabia with aircraft and modern arms the strategic balance of the Middle East is put into question," Mr. Netanyahu said.

The Saudi defence minister, Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz, was quoted as saying in Saudi newspapers Wednesday, "after we were offered several planes, our air force experts decided the

F-16 is a good replacement for the F-5."

Another delicate matter for the Israelis is the extradition of the political leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) from the United States.

Mr. Netanyahu said he has not yet made a decision on extraditing Musa Abu Marzouk (see separate story).

"We are continuing to study this matter," he said.

The Egyptian government newspaper Al-Mussawir said Wednesday Syria has convinced Arab countries not to step up normalisation with Israel despite the Israeli-Palestinian accord on Hebron.

Its editor in chief, Makram Mubammad Ahmad, said: "During their recent tour of the Gulf, Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam and Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Sharaa convinced Arab leaders not to speed up normalisation with Israel in spite of the Hebron accord" under which Israel withdrew from four-fifths of the West Bank town of Hebron last month.

Several Arab capitals including Cairo considered the Jan. 15 agreement, concluded after marathon negotiations, an important step on the road to peace.

In an editorial, Mr. Ahmad said the Syrian officials explained that further normalisation could lead to "increased pressure" by the Jewish state on Syria and "slow down a peaceful settlement on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks."

Israeli companies will take part in three trade fairs

in Oman, which had previously decided to freeze contacts with the Jewish state, the Israeli Export Institute said Wednesday.

The institute said in a statement it had received "official invitations from Oman to participate in three international fairs which will be held in March and April in Muscat."

"In spite of the small amount of time that remains to organise the pavilions, the institute decided to accept the invitations," the statement said, adding that it was "an important opportunity to strengthen economic ties with Oman and the Gulf countries."

Oman and Qatar are the only Gulf Arab countries with trade ties with Israel, but Muscat decided Dec. 4 to freeze contacts with the Jewish state because of the slow pace of the peace process.

However, it announced Jan. 20, after Israel and the Palestinians signed Hebron agreement, that it was ready to resume contacts with Israel.

Mr. Khaddam and Mr. Sharaa began their tour Jan. 17 of the six Gulf states and five North African states.

Mr. Netanyahu "is now sure that the normalisation of relations with the Arab World depends on returning the Golan Heights to Syria," said Al-Mussawir's Ahmad, who is considered close to Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak.

Israeli reports said Mr. Netanyahu will present to Mr. Clinton a compromise package for restarting peace

talks with Syria when the two leaders meet Thursday.

Mr. Netanyahu will tell the U.S. president that Israel is willing to consider a territorial compromise on the Golan Heights, the Maariv daily said.

The prime minister will also acknowledge the understandings reached last year between Syria and Mr. Netanyahu's predecessor, but will insist Israel is not obligated by them, Maariv said.

Mr. Netanyahu and top advisers worked out the new negotiating position ahead of the prime minister's departure for Washington on Wednesday.

"Syria is on the top of the agenda" in the meeting between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Clinton, said Netanyahu spokesman Michael Stoltz.

The Israeli formula for restarting the talks says that Israel is aware of the understandings reached last year. This would allow Israel to bring up some of the issues worked out in the talks, without being committed to all of them.

"The Syrians have to be prepared to understand that if they didn't reach a (signed) agreement there is no obligation of any party," said Israeli government spokesman Moshe Fogel.

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, said this week there was no chance Syria would sign a peace accord without getting back all of the Golan.

Mr. Indyk has been a key broker in Mideast negotiations.

Jordan in efforts to secure release of Sheikh Yassin and Abu Marzouk

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan is involved in efforts to help secure the release of two leaders of the Hamas movement, one of them facing extradition from the U.S. to Israel, an official source said Wednesday.

However, the source declined to confirm reports that Musa Abu Marzouk, head of the political bureau of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), could be sent to Jordan instead of Israel as a compromise to avert possible Palestinian violence that could undermine the peace process.

The source, who did not want to be identified, was commenting on reports in the Israeli press that Mr. Abu Marzouk, was to be "transferred" from the U.S. to Jordan instead of extradited to Israel.

"His Majesty King Hus-

sein is in touch with the U.S. administration in an effort to help resolve two issues — the continued detention of (Hamas founder) Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and the problem of Abu Marzouk extradition," said the source.

Sheikh Yassin, who is serving a life term in an Israeli prison, is reportedly in serious ill-health, and Palestinian leaders have warned of violence by his supporters if he dies while in detention.

Mr. Abu Marzouk, a resident of the U.S. for 12 years, was arrested last year upon his return there after a visit to the Middle East. The arrest came because, according to U.S. officials, his name appeared in a list of suspected "international terrorists."

Israel, citing what it said was Mr. Abu Marzouk's involvement in anti-Israeli attacks, sought his extradition to Jordan was reached after the Israeli secret service said it feared reprisals by Hamas if he was handed over to Israel.

According to the paper, the deal was reached during "secret contacts" between U.S., Jordanian and Israeli legal authorities, and came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered an alternative solution to extraditing Mr. Abu Marzouk.

The United States has also expressed concern Americans might be targeted by the group if Mr. Abu Marzouk was extradited to Israel. Irit Kahane, head of the international section of the Israeli attorney general's office, was involved in the contacts with her U.S. counterparts to bring about the "transfer" of Mr. Abu Marzouk to Jordan, Yediot Achronot said.

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(Continued on page 7)

Iran foundation raises bounty on Rushdie to \$2.5m

TEHRAN (Agencies) — An Iranian religious foundation on Wednesday raised the reward it has put on British author Salman Rushdie's head but President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani immediately distanced the government from the move.

The Khordad-15 Charity foundation said it was hiking the bounty for the killer of Rushdie by \$500,000 to a total of \$2.5 million.

The announcement came on the eve of the eighth anniversary of a death sentence against the Indian-born writer issued by Iran's late spiritual guide Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In addition, the foundation will pay accumulated interest on the earlier standing reward, the foundation's head, Ayatollah Sheikh Hassan Sanei, told the hardline Jomhuri Islami newspaper.

"Imam Khomeini's fatwa is a divine decree and all Muslims are duty-bound to seek to execute it," the ayatollah said. "This verdict is not exclusive to a certain person or nationality. It concerns all Muslims."

Khomeini issued a fatwa, or religious decree, on Feb. 14, 1989 condemning Rushdie to death for allegedly insulting Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses."

But Mr. Rafsanjani on Wednesday distanced himself from the foundation, saying its decision does not concern the government.

"This is a non-governmental organisation and its decisions have nothing to do with the government's policies," the president told a press conference.

"I don't know what their motive was, but the government's policy towards the (Rushdie affair) is the same as before, and one which we have repeatedly announced," he added.

Iranian officials have said they want to resolve the Rushdie affair, pledging not to seek out Mr. Rushdie. But they refuse European Union (EU) calls to lift the fatwa on the grounds it is a religious decree and "untouchable."

The issue is still sensitive in Iran, where hardliners have warned against any compromise and vowed to sabotage any initiative to settle the case.

The Khordad-15 foundation, created after the 1979 Islamic revolution along with several other revolutionary institutions, has been a strong supporter of the fatwa.

Although it is financed by private funds collected under religious obligations, the organisation is run by figures close to the regime.

Ayatollah Sanei himself is a representative of Iran's

paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the foundation.

After the sentence was first passed against Rushdie, the foundation offered \$1 million. But it doubled the bounty in 1991. Two years ago, it even offered to foot the bill for any "expenses" in killing Mr. Rushdie.

Ayatollah Sanei said that anyone who manages to kill the "apostate" Rushdie is entitled to the reward, "whether Muslim or non-Muslim, including Rushdie's bodyguards."

Mr. Rushdie has been living in hiding and under British police protection since Khomeini's threat was issued.

The Guardian newspaper in Britain said Wednesday that London police have stepped up security around the author after the discovery of a fresh plot to carry out the Iranian death threat.

The intelligence services were taking the new threats to Mr. Rushdie's life seriously, it said.

But the Iranian ayatollah vowed that "those seeking him out to carry out God's order will find him in any way possible and remove the obstacles."

"I am certain that in suitable time this job will be done... and Rushdie will be killed and relegated to hell," he said. "Rushdie has to be executed even if he repents and becomes a paragon of virtue."

The fatwa stirred an uproar in the West and caused friction in relations between Iran and European countries, prompting the EU in 1992 to keep exchanges of political delegations with the Islamic republic at low levels.

Tehran and the EU have tried several times to reach an accord in the past two years but to no avail.

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said last month during a visit to Italy that Iran had twice been close to a deal with Europe over Mr. Rushdie, but each time it was scuppered by an EU member state, apparently Britain.

Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, backed by the ruling cleric to be Iran's next president after July elections, said last week he hopes for better ties with Europe, but accused the EU of politicising the Rushdie affair.

He reiterated assurances that Iran had no plans to send commandos to kill the writer.

But Ayatollah Sanei warned presidential candidates not to distance themselves from the fatwa and to "prove they are true followers of Imam Khomeini, who died in 1989 several months after issuing the decree."



HOUSE DEMOLITION: A Palestinian woman admonishes departing Israeli soldiers after the army on Wednesday demolished her water well and garden walls which, according to Israeli authorities, had been built without a permit. Israeli soldiers demolished five structures in the area surrounding the West Bank town of Hebron (Reuters photo)

Ankara calls on Athens to enter dialogue

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey on Wednesday called for Greece to open a broad dialogue to resolve differences which have strained the two NATO allies' relations.

"Turkey is maintaining its position that all the points of disagreement with Greece should be settled in a wide-ranging dialogue," Foreign Ministry spokesman Omar Akbel told journalists.

"We hope that the Greek government will share the same position on launching a dialogue on all the subjects on which Turkey and Greece conflict," he added.

"If tension exists between Turkey and Greece, it's not a result of Turkey's attitude," he said in response to British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind's warning Tuesday that a war between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus is "a serious possibility."

"The Cyprus situation is clear: the Turkish party kept inviting the Greek party to the negotiating table, but hasn't received a favourable response," Mr. Akbel said.

"The Greek party on the island, in complete cooperation with Greece, prefers conflict to reconciliation," he charged.

U.S. reportedly warns Russia against Iranian missile plans

LOS ANGELES (Agencies) — Washington has issued a diplomatic warning to Moscow about Russian assistance to Iran's missile programme that potentially could threaten U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, several Gulf allies and Israel, the Los Angeles Times reported on Wednesday.

Quoting senior Clinton administration officials, the newspaper said intelligence reports indicated that Russia recently transferred to Iran technology for the Russian SS-4 missile, which has a range almost three times greater than that of any missile now in Iran's arsenal.

The transfer basically involved detailed instructions on how to construct the missile's delivery system.

But the Los Angeles Times quoted Israeli officials as saying the transfer also included some parts for an SS-4 missile which has a range of 2,010 kilometres.

The diplomatic warning was reportedly issued during talks last week between Vice-President Al Gore and visiting Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Mr. Chernomyrdin denied that Moscow had authorised transfer of the missile and acknowledged that such action would be a violation of a 1994 pledge by Russian President Boris Yeltsin not to engage in further arms sales to Tehran.

U.S. officials were speculating about whether the missile technology could

have been transferred to Iran from cash-strapped former Soviet arms producers or complexes, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said in New Haven, Connecticut on Tuesday the Middle East was being threatened by a "fundamentalist movement" led by Iran.

Mr. Peres, in a speech at Yale University, urged Jews, Muslims and Christians to unite against such fundamentalism.

The Middle East was threatened by "a fundamentalist movement that tries to shake up and endanger practically every existing system in the Arab world. And its headquarters are today in a single country — Iran," Mr. Peres said.

Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani said Wednesday Iran would show a "new face" to the United States if Washington releases the Islamic Republic's frozen assets.

"If America has goodwill, all it needs to do is return our assets," the president told a press conference in Tehran.

"This we will interpret as a shift in their stance (towards Iran) ... and they can then see another face from Iran," he added.

Washington froze Iranian assets in the United States after radical students stormed the U.S. embassy here in 1980 taking its staff hostage and prompting a break in diplomatic ties.

Tehran has estimated its frozen assets at around \$10 billion, a figure sharply contested by Washington.

Mr. Rafsanjani said, however, he does not expect any early breakthrough in relations with the United States. "I don't see any horizon for better ties as nothing has changed," he said.

Washington, accusing Iran of sponsoring international terrorism and pursuing a military buildup in the Gulf, has waged a campaign to isolate the country, especially on the economic front.

Mr. Rafsanjani also criticised Japan for refusing to stick to its commitment to finance a hydroelectric power plant in southwestern Iran.

"The Japanese have made another mistake and reneged on their contract to please Israel and the United States," said Mr. Rafsanjani. In 1993, the Japanese government lifted an 18-year freeze on low-interest loans to Iran with an initial installment of \$8.6 billion yen (\$360 million) for the 2,000-megawatt project on Karun river in Khuzestan province.

A second tranche was suspended in mid-1994 following a U.S. call for economic sanctions against Iran.

"Within two or three years we will ourselves build the plant at a cheaper cost," the president said, although stressing that Tehran and Tokyo had good commercial relations.

NEWS IN BRIEF

France buys Israeli anti-collision device

TEL AVIV (AFP) — France has purchased a new Israeli device to prevent mid-air collisions between planes, the Haaretz newspaper reported on Wednesday. The Ehud was invented by Israeli fighter pilots and engineers at the state-owned Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), and its development cost \$30 million, the daily said. It said two other countries, India and "a country in South-east Asia," have also bought the device, while Germany has shown interest in the project. Haaretz regretted the Israeli air force did not use the device before the Feb. 4 collision that killed 73 soldiers headed for Lebanon. But it noted the two transport helicopters were flying too close for the device to work. If the helicopters had been flying at a higher altitude, even with the lowest visibility, the Ehud would have been able to raise the alarm, the newspaper said. French defence Minister Charles Millon began Tuesday an official, two-day visit to Israel. He was slated to visit Israel's military industries and meet his counterpart Yitzhak Mordechai.

Dealer sneaks heroin into Kuwaiti hospital

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A Lebanese man has been arrested here for smuggling heroin inside potato crisp packets to drug addicts receiving hospital treatment for their addiction, a newspaper said Wednesday. The Lebanese man carefully concealed heroin inside crisp packets that showed no signs of tampering and sent them with clothes and other belongings to addicts being treated in a psychiatric hospital, Al-Rai Al-Aam reported. The man, whose name was not given, was arrested by the anti-drugs unit of the criminal investigation department and has now been handed over to the public prosecution to continue investigations, the report said.

Single Israeli women to get access to sperm banks

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Single Israeli women will be able to go to sperm banks for artificial insemination just like married women do, the health ministry announced Tuesday. The announcement came after unmarried women filed a lawsuit with the supreme court saying they were being discriminated against in comparison with married women. Previously, single women had to get a favourable opinion from a medical committee in order to get access to a sperm bank while this procedure was unnecessary for married women. An unmarried couple living together and a lesbian couple who wanted to raise children had appealed to the court with the backing of the Israeli civic rights association.

Turkish air force kills 43 rebels in Iraq

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish air force killed 43 Kurdish rebels in three raids on separatist Kurdish camps in northern Iraq in January, the semi-official Turkish news agency Anatolia said Wednesday. The air raids were ordered after the rebels of the Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK) were detected preparing to attack targets in Turkey, the agency said, without providing further details. The F-16 and F-4 aircraft killed 23 PKK members at a camp in the region of Metina in northern Iraq and another 20 in the Zap region. The agency did not name its source for its report. Turkey frequently sends troops and planes into northern Iraq to attack bases of the PKK, which has been fighting since 1984 for the creation of an independent Kurdish homeland.

Palestinian killed by bomb in Lebanon

AIN AL HILWEH (AFP) — A Palestinian was killed on Wednesday in a graveyard in a refugee camp in South Lebanon when a bomb he was carrying exploded. Palestinian security sources said. The overnight explosion of the "sophisticated" bomb took place in the Ain Al Hilweh shantytown in the outskirts of the southern port city of Sidon, they said. The blast ripped the bomb-carrier's body apart and destroyed a wall in the graveyard, the sources said. A driving licence was found on the body in the name of Mohammad Kamel Abdallah, 28, a Palestinian refugee from Beirut's eastern suburb of Dekwaneh.

U.S. warship rescues crew of Iranian boat

DUBAI (AFP) — A U.S. warship on Wednesday rescued nine crewmen of an Iranian cargo boat which began taking on water as it sailed from Qatar to the Iranian port of Bushehr, the U.S. Navy said. A rescue team from the U.S. ship Anitama boarded the boat, a traditional wooden dhow, after the flooding damaged the vessel's engine and contaminated its fuel supply, the Navy said in a statement. The crew were taken aboard the Anitama where they were given food and clothing and were taken to the Qatari capital of Doha. The dhow was abandoned after its tow line broke in rough seas, it said. The United States and Iran each accuse the other of causing insecurity in the Gulf with their military presence.

Princess Aliya birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — Today marks the birthday of H.R.H. Princess Aliya bint Al-Hussein.

Princess Aliya was born on Feb. 13, 1950, the Princess first studied at the Al-Hussein private school in Jordan before moving to complete her secondary school education in London.

Princess Aliya graduated at the top of her class with a degree in English from the University of London in 1972.

The Princess is president of the Princess Aliya Society for Arab Women and has been active in social and community work. She has been involved in many charitable projects.

RSCN to meet with S

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is expected to meet with the Saudi National Society for the Conservation of Nature (SNSCN) in the field of nature conservation and protection of species.

The RSCN is planning to hold a seminar on the conservation of nature in the Middle East, which will be held in Amman. The seminar will focus on the conservation of natural resources and the environment.

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Survey of

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN (Petra) — Recently published preliminary results of a survey conducted by the Department of Statistics in cooperation with the UNDP-based Institute for Applied Social Science (IASS) showed several "general impressions" regarding Jordanian society and shed light on living conditions in the Kingdom.

Depicted as "very descriptive of what Jordanian society is like," by Sociologist Salem Rihani and cited as the first of its kind by the Director of the Household Section at the Department of Statistics, Abdul Halim Kharabsheli, the survey covered over 10,000 households and 100,000 individuals throughout the Kingdom.

A total of 100 households were surveyed from Irbid, Ajlun and Jerash, the Balqa region and Madaba, Zarqa and Ma'traj, and the southern districts of Karak, Irbid, Ma'an and Aqaba, while 1,500 households were surveyed in the Amman district.

The questionnaire, presented by a specially trained group of 50 female and 10 male experts, was focused on three sections: "woman and household," "woman and child," and "individuals."

Some of the questions were related to family planning, reproductive health, and child health. The survey also covered the employment of female workers, which was more appropriate, Mr. Kharabsheli explained.

"The most astonishing information suggested by

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:05Cartoon
14:30Curiosity Show
15:00N.B.A. Basketball
17:00News Flash
17:02Out of This World
18:00French Programmes
19:30News Headlines
19:35Parenthood
20:00Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Babylon 5 (Science Fiction)
21:10Kung Fu-The Legend
22:00News in English
22:25 Feature Film: "Armed and Innocent"
23:59Tarata

PRAYER TIMES

05:59Fajr
06:17(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:50Dhuhr
14:55Asr
17:23Maghreb
18:40Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swiftdale, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
637855.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 77261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751.

Amman International Church
Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.

The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
It will be sunny to partly cloudy with moderate weather conditions prevailing during the day becoming cool at night and winds northwesterly to northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Mini/Max. Temperatures

Amman02/15
Aqaba07/20
Deserts00/16
Jordan Valley07/20
Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 13, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 45 per cent, Aqaba 34 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Jihad Sammour765018

Dr. Ghaleb Zawaideh736011

Dr. Khaldoun Asfour693440

Dr. Bilal Alsayed890280

Firas pharmacy661912

Ferdous pharmacy778336

Al Asma pharmacy637055

Al Salan pharmacy636730

Yacoub pharmacy644945

Shamsani pharmacy637660

Nairoukh pharmacy623672

Najib pharmacy847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Al Rub
276852

Al Quds pharmacy(---)

ZARQA:

Dr. Aloram Haddad985550

Khalifeh pharmacy985417

Highway Police843402

Traffic Police896390

Public Security Department
630321

Hotel Complaints605800

Price Complaints661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints897467

Amman Municipality Complaints787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance)121

Overseas Calls010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101

Abdall Telephone Repairs
661101

Jordan Television773111

Radio Jordan774111

Water Authority680100

Jordan Electricity Authority
815615

Electric Power Company
636381

RJ Flight Information 08-
53300

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-
53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre
813813/32

Khalidi Maternity644281/6

Akileh Maternity642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity
642362

Malhas, J. Amman636140

Palestine, Shamsani607071

Shamsani Hospital669131

University Hospital845845

Al-Moasser Hospital
667227/9

The Islamic, Abdall 666126/37

Al-Abdi, Abdall664164/6

Italian, Al-Mutajreen
777101/3

Al-Bashir,775111/26

Army, Marka891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital
602240/50

Amal Hospital674155

The Arab Centre for Heart
and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Zarga Govt. Hospital
(09)983323

Zarga National Hospital
(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital
(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital
(02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital
(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital
(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital
(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen

Princess Alia celebrates birthday today

AMMAN (Petra) — Today marks the birthday of HRH Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein.

Born in Amman on Feb. 13, 1956, the Princess first studied at the Ahliah private school in Jordan before moving to complete her secondary school education in London.



Princess Alia efforts to boost women's rights and promote better services for Jordanian children.

Princess Alia graduated at the top of her class with a degree in English from the University of Jordan in 1972.

The Princess is president of the Pan-Arab Society for Arabian Horses and honorary chairperson of a number of clubs and voluntary and charitable societies.

Princess Alia has been continually involved in

House ratifies additional articles of draft companies law

By Maria Bizri
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament Wednesday ratified 12 more of the 292 articles of a draft companies law.

During yesterday's session, the House amended and ratified 12 articles governing the organisation, accounts and book-keeping procedures of public shareholding companies.

The ratified articles state that no disbursement of dividends or return on investments of public sharehold-

ing companies can be made before 10% of their net annual profits are placed in an obligatory reserves account.

The draft law also requires that public shareholding companies allocate at least 1% of their net annual profits towards research and development projects and vocational training.

Furthermore, the draft law stipulates that the allocated amount or part of it must be spent on the above-mentioned projects within three years of its deduction, with the rest

transferred to a special fund to be set up for research and development and vocational purposes.

The draft law also stipulates that the board of directors of public shareholding companies must establish a financial and legal independent savings fund for their employees.

The Lower House session was presided by Speaker of the House Sa'ad Hayel Srour and attended by a number of Cabinet members.

Government responds to JEA declaration

AMMAN (J.T.) — In response to public sector engineer threats to stage a strike on Feb. 22 for higher salary demands, the government announced Wednesday that it has, indeed, fulfilled its commitments as stipulated in a "memorandum of understanding" regarding salary raises and allowances.

The government maintained that it raised the engineers' allowances from 90 to 120 per cent.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Hadi Majali asserted that not only did the government raise the level of the professional allowance but it also raised overtime allowances for engineers from 30 to 60 per cent.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, he said that the government

appointed ministerial committee, entrusted with the issue, will hold a meeting with the Council of Professional Association Presidents in order to study the issue and hear their views before submitting a report to the Council of Ministers.

Furthermore, the minister stated that the government has resolved to upgrade the status of those engineers who are paid daily by offering them contracts to work for public sector institutions.

In a statement to Al-Dustour Arabic daily, published Wednesday, the Jordan Engineers' Association (JEA) President Hosni Abu Ghaida affirmed that public sector engineers will continue with the strike on Feb. 22.

Justifying this decision, he described the govern-

ment's statement regarding allowances as "unclear" and faulted the administration for not responding to all of the engineers' demands.

Mr. Abu Ghaida stated that the JEA council will hold an extraordinary meeting to discuss the government's decision regarding allowances and will later convey their recommendations to the JEA general assembly.

He described the JEA as willing to dialogue with the government.

In his remarks to Petra, Mr. Majali called on professional organisations to remember that Jordan has limited financial resources and that the government was doing its utmost to improve the engineers' living conditions.

RSCN to meet with Saudi counterpart

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) seeks to strengthen cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the field of nature conservation and endangered species protection.

The RSCN has made plans to discuss common goals with a visiting Saudi delegation due on Friday, RSCN Director General Khaled Irani said Wednesday.

The delegation from the Saudi National Society for the Conservation of Nature is scheduled to debate the possibility of twinning wild life reserves in Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

The two are also slated to draw up common plans for protecting wild species of plants and animals based on information gathered from research and studies conducted by RSCN specialists.

Mr. Irani told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the two groups plan to confer over the prospect of establishing joint wildlife reserves to protect species living around or close to Jordan and Saudi Arabia's common borders.

The RSCN was established in 1966 to conduct activities dedicated to the conservation of nature and natural resources.

It is currently responsible

for six wildlife reserves in the Kingdom: Azraq, Shaumari, Wadi Mujib, Zubiya, Dana and Wadi Rum.

The Saudi delegation's visit comes at the invitation of the RSCN which hopes to boost joint research and study programmes and expand activities in matters connected with wildlife preservation, Mr. Irani stated.

It also promotes the multiplication of various types of endangered species, he said, adding that the similarity in the two countries' topography and geography will help them achieve success in their joint endeavours, he said.

The RSCN previously presented the Saudi society with several Arabian oryxes and received several ostriches from them, the latter of which are now being bred at Mujib Wildlife Reserve, located in the southern Karak governorate.

The Saudi delegation will tour the RSCN's various wildlife reserves to familiarise themselves with operations and methods used to protect animals and plants, according to Mr. Irani.

The RSCN has succeeded in protecting and increasing the number of wild animals ranging from the Arabian oryx and ibex to fallow deer and gazelles.

PSD announces 92 persons arrested last month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Security Department (PSD) Wednesday announced the arrest of 92 Jordanians and other Arabs last month in connection with drug trafficking, peddling, counterfeit currency and utilisation of false passports.

Director of the PSD Anti-Narcotics and Forgery Department, Colonel Nazih Shreideh stated that his office received a tip regarding a man suspected of selling heroin in a number of the Kingdom's governorates.

He affirmed that the PSD succeeded in apprehending the suspect, who was reportedly attempting to sell two kilograms of heroin.

Col. Shreideh also announced the arrest of 85 persons who, he said, possessed 100 kilograms of hashish and 254 captagon drug pills. The suspects were duly referred to judicial authorities.

He said that additionally his office apprehended two persons attempting to sell forged U.S. dollars. Through investigations and interrogations, the police surmised that the two persons have already sold or laundered \$55,000 in counterfeit currency through local banks.

Col. Shreideh explained that the suspects created forged documents and identity cards to help facilitate sales.

The department also apprehended non-Jordanian Arabs in possession of Jordanian passports which, Col. Shreideh confirmed, had been procured through false documentation.

He said that the four had been wanted by police for a long time in connection with drug trafficking and primarily attempted to smuggle drugs to their respective countries.

Col. Shreideh maintained that drug traffickers unsuc-

cessfully attempted to smuggle their wares during weekends and public holidays.

Also Wednesday, the police reported the death of three Jordanians in a road accident on Tuesday night on the Naqab-Aqaba highway.

They were identified as Salem Mohammad Ajalin, 27, Mohammad Eid Ajalin, 29, and Mohammad Mifteh Farid, 31, all from the Marjeh district in the Ma'an Governorate.

The accident was attributed to the driver of a small car who apparently attempted to overtake the car ahead when his car collided head-on with an oncoming fuel truck traveling in the opposite direction.

The police stated that the collision resulted in the immediate death of the three persons in the small car which bore a Saudi Arabian licence plate.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Health centre to open in Mafrak

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health Adel Baqarah Wednesday resolved to establish a health centre at Deir Al-Qunbeh in the Mafrak governorate.

Aviation delegation to arrive in Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — An official Netherlands aviation delegation will arrive in the Kingdom Friday to hold talks with Jordanian aviation officials regarding bilateral cooperation in aerial fields.

Survey disproves 'general impressions' of living conditions in Jordan

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Recently published preliminary results of a survey conducted by the Department of Statistics in cooperation with the Oslo-based Institute for Applied Social Science, FAFO, disproved several "general impressions" regarding Jordanian society and shed light on living conditions in the Kingdom.

Depicted as "very descriptive of what Jordanians' living conditions are really like" by Sociologist Sabri Rbeihat and cited as "the first of its kind" by Director of the Household Section at the Department of Statistics Abdul Halim Kharabseh, the survey covered over 6,000 households and 36,000 individuals throughout the Kingdom.

A total of 900 households were surveyed from Irbid, Ajloun and Jerash, the Balqa region and Madaba, Zarqa and Mafrak, and the southern districts of Karak, Tafleh, Ma'an and Aqaba, while 1,500 households were surveyed in the Amman district.

The questionnaire, presented by a specially trained group of 50 female and 10 male experts, was composed of three sections focusing on "households," "woman and child," and "individuals."

As some of the questions were related to family planning, reproductive and child health, "the employment of female interviewers was more appropriate," Mr. Kharabseh explained.

"The most astonishing information suggested by

the survey is that living conditions of Jordanians are below the level we were aware of," said Dr. Rbeihat, former consultant at Noor Al Hussein Foundation and currently professor at Philadelphia University.

Figures from the 1994 census indicated that about 107,000 families — approximately 14.5 per cent of the country's total population — live below the poverty line, with a monthly income of less than JD 102, and 32,000 of these families live in abject degradation with a monthly income totalling less than JD 60.

Updating these figures, the recent survey indicated that 23.1 per cent of the families questioned receives an annual income of JD 1,800 to 2,900, while only 12 per cent of the families boasts an annual income above JD 4,300, which breaks down to little more than JD 350 a month.

While more than half of Jordanian families witnessed no improvement in their financial situation between 1994 and 1995, 22.8 per cent conceded that their 1995 annual income was less than that of 1994.

Notwithstanding these figures, 49 per cent of those interviewed judged themselves as "not rich but with an acceptable financial status."

Only one per cent of the families surveyed by the Department of Statistics teams stated they felt they were "from the rich class," while 53.8 per cent defined themselves as "neither rich nor poor."

Similarly, "while poor housing conditions for a large percentage of the

population are quite apparent from the survey, many interviewees defined them as 'adequate,'" Dr. Rbeihat said.

The survey included questions related to various variables descriptive of the household, such as the number of rooms for sleeping and the availability of independent kitchens as well as the type of energy used for heating and the type of sewage system.

Queried as to whether or not they were satisfied with their housing conditions, more than 35 per cent of those interviewed declared themselves "very satisfied," and more than 47 per cent defined their housing conditions as "rather satisfactory."

That, notwithstanding the crude reality suggested by the figures, most of the people interviewed would not admit that their situation is "below the standards," might be due to two factors, Dr. Rbeihat suggested.

In some cases, "people might not even be aware of what 'adequate standards' are and, therefore might not be capable of comparing their actual situation with them and judging accordingly," Dr. Rbeihat said.

But in most cases, the reason for the gap between the family's actual financial situation or living conditions and their perception of same could lay on the group-oriented and non-individualist character of Jordanian society, he said.

In Jordanian society, "the group is more important than the individual," Dr. Rbeihat noted, "and sometimes the interviewees give

the answer they know society expects from them."

Therefore, "reporting is indicative of what they perceive as the group's expectations and data can be inflated or deflated, severely, threatening the survey's validity," Dr. Rbeihat argued.

Moreover, in other cases people might tend to answer "fashionably" that which they have repeatedly heard from somebody else, instead of objectively describing their situation, thus once again jeopardising the validity of the survey's data.

Questions included in the survey ranged from employment status to smoking and other habits as well as opinions about the earliest suitable age of marriage for girls to breast-feeding.

Jointly with the interviewees' sensibility to group expectations, Dr. Rbeihat identified a lack of differentiation among the different types of communities as another of the survey's limits.

Though for each collected datum the geographical distribution is specified, no reference is made in the tabulations to the different types of communities, he noted.

"From Abdoun, (an affluent residential area), to Jabal Nuzha (an impoverished area), the Amman governorate features more than 20 different social communities," Dr. Rbeihat said.

According to him, there were two main widespread "general impressions" disproved by the survey's data.

Contrary to a common belief of a high internal

migration rate among Jordanians, only 6.6 per cent of the households expressed the wish to move to another area.

In light of the survey's data, Jordanians seem to be pretty stationary people.

Of those who wish to move to another area, approximately one quarter plan to do so within a year's time, mainly for housing aspects deemed inadequate (60 per cent), low work opportunities (13.6 per cent), unsuitable social (14.6 per cent) or outdoor environments (4.9 per cent).

Discrepancies between facts and image also run deeply in the field of education. According to the survey, 7.7 per cent of the Kingdom's population holds a university degree.

As official statistics state that 18 per cent of the college-age population is actually enrolled in college, this has led to the "general impression" that the number of graduates was higher, Dr. Rbeihat stated.

Sponsored by the United Nations' Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the survey cost around JD 900,000, Mr. Kharabseh told the Jordan Times.

The base-line report, based on data presented in the tabulations and prepared by a "local social scientist" whose name has not yet been disclosed, is due "in the next few months," he concluded.

What's Going On

SALE/EXHIBITION

*Bazaar and open house at Umm Al Qundum, Airport Rd., exit to Arabian Horse Club, every Friday from 11 a.m. — 5 p.m.

EXHIBITION

*Bani Hamida exhibition/sale of handicrafts

(rugs, cushions, runners, and wall-hangings, Jabal Amman (Tel. 6556967), until Feb. 28.

*Works by contemporary Arab artists entitled "The New Collection" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, (Tel. 643251/2), until Feb. 27.

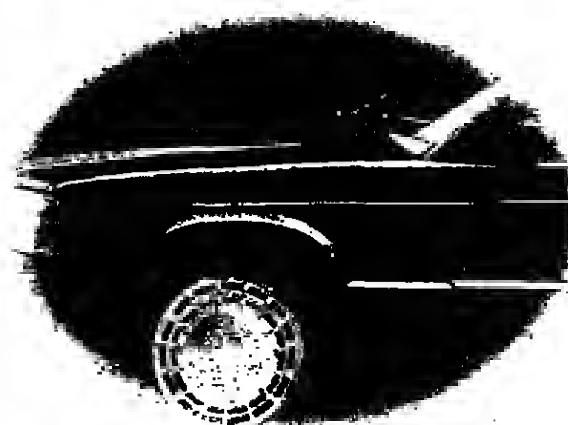


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Security forces kill extremists holed up in Algiers building

ALGIERS (AFP) — Security forces in central Algiers Wednesday raided a building where suspected Muslim extremists were holed up and killed several after a standoff of several hours, witnesses said.

The operation began around 3:00 a.m. (0200 GMT) when security forces surrounded the building and used rockets and grenades to try and flush out the suspects in the 14-storey building.

Witnesses said one of the suspects holed up in a fifth-floor apartment survived the attack. They added that there were no civilian casualties.

"Some of the suspects tried to flee by attempting to break through a partition wall but they did not have any luck," a witness said.

The building is close to the headquarters of the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), whose leader Abdelhak Benhamouda was assassinated on Jan. 29. Mr. Benhamouda was killed in front of the building by five men who managed to flee on foot.

In other developments Wednesday, a daily newspaper reported that two schoolgirls had been kidnapped on their way to

school in Ben Chicac near Medea, south of the Algerian capital.

Al Khabar said the girls were abducted Tuesday by "an armed group" — a phrase often used by the authorities to describe Islamic militants — and taken to a hideout.

Soldiers mounted a search but found no trace of them. Armed groups have been active in Medea since the last week of the fasting month of Ramadan that ended Saturday in Algeria.

Forcing people in towns to set up defence units and villagers in isolated areas to flee, Al Khabar reported.

The Holy Month of Ramadan which ended at the weekend was the most violent of the last five years with a string of car bombings and massacres that left more than 350 people dead and hundreds more injured.

The Muslim uprising in Algeria began after the military intervened in January 1992 to cancel the second round of elections the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win.

Since then, more than 50,000 people have been killed, according to Western estimates.

Blow to N. Korea as senior official seeks asylum in south

SEOUL (AFP) — A senior North Korean official Wednesday asked for asylum in the South Korean embassy in Beijing in the highest level defection from the isolated Stalinist state.

Workers' Party Secretary Hwang Jang-Yop, 73, entered the embassy in the morning accompanied by an aide and asked for asylum, the South's Information Minister Oh In-Hwan said here.

The defection was bound to be a severe embarrassment to the North, which is preparing to mark the 55th birthday Saturday of its uncrowned leader Kim Jong-il, son and heir of Kim Il-Sung, who died suddenly in 1994, analysts said.

"We are now contacting Chinese authorities over this issue. It is a sign of collapse of the North Korean regime," Mr. Oh told journalists in a hastily-called briefing here.

Mr. Hwang is described by North Korea experts as "a high ranking and influential figure and a political brain who had long helped Kim Il-Sung formulate his philosophy of self reliance (Juche)."

Mr. Hwang and the aide bolted to the South Korean consulate while returning to Pyongyang through Beijing from a trip to Japan where he attended a seminar from Feb. 7-11, Mr. Oh said.

An official at the embassy said: "We are now protecting them in our compound. We have also informed the Chinese government on this matter and are in negotiations with the Chinese gov-

ernment to finalise the situation."

The most recent North Korea defections list Mr. Hwang's titles as secretary of the secretariat of the Workers Party in charge of international affairs and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly.

"Hwang Jang-Yop accompanied by an aide, Kim Dok-Hong, arrived at our consular office in Beijing and requested asylum. He said he wanted to defect to our country," Yoo Kwang-Suk, the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Pacific affairs director told AFP.

"We informed the Chinese authorities of this incident and we are going to handle this matter through diplomatic channels," the director said.

North Korea is currently suffering dire food and economic problems, and most analysts say they think the junior Kim will formally take power sometime after July this year, the third anniversary of the elder Kim's death.

In Seoul, South Korean Foreign Minister Yoo Jong-Ha cancelled a scheduled trip to ASEM (Asia-European meeting) in Singapore to take part in a top-level meeting of government officials to discuss the defection, foreign ministry officials said.

The officials said Seoul planned to send a high level delegation to Beijing, where South Korean Ambassador Chong Jung-Wook told Korean reporters that Mr.

Hwang had reconfirmed that his request for asylum was "of his own will."

The ambassador was quoted by a Yonhap reporter in Beijing as saying "this is a very sensitive issue. We will do our best to realise his defection."

Mr. Kim Dok-Hong, was described by the ambassador as a North Korean state-owned company chief.

In Seoul both the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) and main opposition parties welcomed the asylum bid. The opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) called it "a significant and grave incident which signals the start of the collapse in North Korea."

The opposition party also said Mr. Hwang was known as a leading figure "who had confronted hard liners in North Korea."

"His defection would seem to signal a victory for hardliners, so we would ask the government to be cautious and prudent in handling this issue," the NCNP statement warned.

Beijing, Pyongyang's closest political ally whose soldiers fought alongside North Koreans in the devastating 1950-53 Korean War, maintains a careful equilibrium policy towards Pyongyang and Seoul.

Officials and independent observers have confirmed that Chinese border guards routinely send border crossers back to North Korea, although some defectors have been allowed out of China.

Mass trials and executions follow Muslim riots in China

BEIJING (AFP) — China has exacted swift and bloody retribution on the instigators of violent riots in Xinjiang, executing around 100 Muslim separatists after summary trials, residents said Wednesday.

More than 1,000 protesters were arrested during and after two days of bloody clashes between ethnic Uighur Muslims and Han Chinese on Feb. 5 and 6, in the frontier town of Yining which left 10 dead and several dozen injured, officials said.

Han Chinese account for 37 per cent of the population in Xinjiang — China's only Muslim majority region.

"The trials began on the sixth and six ring leaders were executed the same day," said one non-Han resident in Yining.

Another local source, citing police officials, confirmed that the executions had already begun in earnest.

"Friends working in the Public Security Bureau told me that trials have been taking place every day on the outskirts of the town, and that around 100 leaders have already been executed," he said.

A police spokesman in Yining not only refused to confirm the executions, but also denied that the riots had even taken place.

"Nothing happened here last week," he said.

The reports of mass executions were backed up by exiled Uighur separatist groups operating in neighbouring Kazakhstan, whose border is just 50 kilometres north of Yining.

A spokesman for the United Revolutionary National Front (URNF) in the Kazakh capital, Almaty, said Tuesday that 30 Uighur activists had been executed in public on Feb. 7 in Yining.

While the local Xinjiang media has avoided any mention of the executions, residents said coverage of last week's riots had been dominated by calls for the public to "close ranks" against the splittists, and "oppose all counter-revolutionary activities."

According to unconfirmed reports, mili-

tant activists battling for an independent Uighur state met in Yining suburbs last week to plan a large-scale demonstration for Feb. 9 — the last day of the Muslim festival of Ramadan.

"But the police were tipped off and arrested most of the activists, including some who had come from other places in Xinjiang like Kashgar," a non-Muslim resident said, adding the six executed Thursday were part of the militant group.

The activists who managed to escape the police raid have now become the target of an intensive manhunt, which has already led to the closure of Yining Airport and roadblocks on all the town's access routes.

An airport official said normal flights should be resumed Friday.

In Yining, armed members of the paramilitary People's Armed Police (PAP) were still patrolling the streets and enforcing a midnight to 7:00 a.m. curfew imposed immediately after the riots.

"Han Chinese don't dare go out after dark, as some who tried were killed in the days after the violence," said a young Chinese hotel staffer.

"Before this happened, I never had any qualms about going out in the evenings, but now I stay at home," she said.

Buses and taxis were back on the streets Wednesday, while shops and restaurants that had pulled down their shutters during the riots were given the green light to open up again.

According to the UNRF in Kazakhstan, separate protests took place last week in the capital of Xinjiang, Urumqi, and the city of Khotan in the south.

That report was officially denied by the Xinjiang regional government, as well as Khotan residents reached by phone.

Maskhadov inaugurated as Chechen president

GROZNY, Russia (AFP) — Separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov was inaugurated as Chechnya's president in Grozny Wednesday, swearing to continue the Uly Muslim republic's drive for independence from Russia.

"I swear to reinforce the independence of the Chechen state, to respect the constitution and the laws and to defend the rights of all citizens," he said in his oath, which was taken on the Koran.

Mr. Maskhadov, who commanded the Chechen forces in their 21-month war to drive out Russian troops sent to restore Moscow's rule, said he was defending "the right of the Chechens who have fought for their freedom for the past 300 years."

His swearing-in at a hastily refurbished town hall in the south of Grozny brought loud cheers of "Allah Akbar" (God is greatest) from the approximately 500 guests.

Also attending was Russian Security Council Secretary Ivan Rybkin, and his predecessor Alexander Lebed, who negotiated the peace accord ending the war last August, but was then sacked by President Boris Yeltsin.

There were no high-ranking foreign representatives at the inauguration following warnings from Moscow against anything that might be seen as recognition of Chechen independence.

Moscow has already warned that any country which extends diplomatic recognition will lose its diplomatic ties to Russia.

Outside, about 1,000 Chechen fighters swore their loyalty to Mr. Maskhadov, then fired a thunderous volley of automatic weapons fire in the air for about 10 minutes, the traditional Chechen way to celebrate.

A large crowd of onlookers waited in the street and the trees were full of people trying to catch a better vantage point. Fighters stood guard on the roofs around the town hall.

Mr. Maskhadov was elected on Jan. 27 in the first elections since the end of the war and the pull-out of all Russian troops.

Under the peace accord negotiated by Gen. Lebed and Mr. Maskhadov, up to five years have been set aside for defining Chechnya's political status.

Meanwhile, Moscow insists the republic remains part of Russia, while the Chechens, who first declared independence in 1991, say they are already a sovereign state.

Mr. Maskhadov faces tough negotiations, particularly as Moscow has linked desperately needed financial aid to the issue of Chechnya remaining part of Russia.

In an emotional speech, Mr. Maskhadov referred to Chechnya's long history of uprisings against Russian rule and the Soviets' deportation of every Chechen to Central Asia from 1944 to 1958, in which almost a third of the population died.



Supporters of the Zajedno (Together) Coalition wait for the beginning of opposition rally in the centre of Belgrade Tuesday. Some 60,000 Belgraders gathered at the main city square after the Serbian parliament passed a special law reinstating in principle opposition victories in local elections last November (Reuter photo)

Serb opposition sceptical, signals more protests

BELGRADE (R) — Serbian opposition won a gratifying victory Tuesday when the parliament reinstated its local election victories but, sceptical of President Slobodan Milosevic's goodwill, signalled more protests.

"The adoption of the bill has solved one problem — of the election theft. However, these 85 days have showed that there are many other problems left," Zoran Djindjic, one of the three opposition Zajedno (Together) Coalition leaders, told Reuters.

"The citizens are dissatisfied with many things — economic poverty, bad media, bad policy, the arrogant attitude of the authorities which can be solved only by fundamental reforms."

"If the reforms do not come quickly, and I am thinking in terms of days, I think this process will not only continue but will even expand," he said.

This would be bad news for Mr. Milosevic who, facing economic disaster at home, ruined credibility abroad and pressure from the West, hoped to end the paralysing and potentially volatile street protests with

the parliament action.

A special law passed by the Serbian parliament reinstates opposition election victories in Serbia's 14 biggest cities, including Belgrade.

The ruling Socialists had annulled the victories on grounds of unspecified "irregularities" — a move that prompted an international outcry and three months of massive protests.

The huge demonstrations opened up cracks in the leftist monolith which had ruled Serbia for 52 years.

Mr. Milosevic, facing the biggest challenge in his 10 years in power and rifts within his party and the police over whether to use force, asked the Socialist-dominated parliament to approve a bill recognising the opposition victories.

The Serbian deputies voted 128 in favour of the bill with three abstentions. Zajedno did not attend the session and ultra-nationalists walked out before the vote after obstructing the passage of the bill for hours.

The Serbian parliament also approved a new cabinet, in line with Mr. Milosevic's promise of quick reforms but opposition leaders dis-

missed the shuffle as cosmetic.

A deputy prime minister and six other ministers were ousted. Among key changes was the appointment of Milan Boko to head a new ministry that will begin the privatisation of the huge, financially ailing state sector of the economy.

Radmila Milentijevic, a hard-line Milosevic loyalist, was appointed to the Information Ministry and immediately said the majority of students were not protesting in the streets.

For the past 12 weeks tens of thousands of students have protested against the elections fraud.

Judging by the protesters' reaction to the cabinet shuffle or the passage of the bill, it is unlikely they would cease venting their anger at the authorities, biased state media and the deteriorating economic situation.

"The Socialists are just buying time until the Republican and presidential elections. As far as we are concerned, the opposition will have the necessary means to keep fighting on," said Ranko Fungja, a 53-year-old Belgrade citizen.

"On Nov. 18 the president

of Serbia decided to steal our votes and spit in the face of all people in Serbia," Vesna Pesic, told 60,000 supporters in Belgrade Tuesday evening.

"The regime is terminally ill but we still face a long uphill struggle. We want full media freedom but I'm afraid we shall be seeing each other for quite some time to achieve that," the Nobel Peace Prize nominee said.

Ms. Pesic is one of three peace activists from former Yugoslavia to be nominated for the Nobel Prize by the International Peace Bureau. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright issued a personal appeal to Mr. Milosevic, urging him to ensure the election results were reinstated and open a dialogue with his opponents.

In what could be an alarming signal of the new government policy line, Mr. Milentijevic in turn accused the United States and Germany of meddling in Serbia's internal affairs.

"The influence by the United States and Germany in Serbia's internal affairs is big and that is not such a good thing."

Albania gets Vlore police chief after unrest

VLORE, Albania (AFP) — The Albanian authorities have sacked Vlore's police chief after a week-long rampage in the southern port which left three dead, sources at police headquarters said Wednesday.

News of his dismissal emerged as several hundred people demonstrated outside Vlore's police station, with some shouting threats to set fire to the premises and others urging calm.

The crowd later moved

without incident to the town's central square.

Vlore has been the hardest hit of several Albanian cities rocked by protests that followed the collapse of high-risk Pyramid investment schemes.

As well as the deaths in Vlore, 150 people had been injured.

The government veered away at the last minute Tuesday from declaring a state of emergency in the town.

Outgoing Police Chief Fokol Mulosmanj was widely loathed in Vlore, a centre for smuggled goods from Italy that has a long history of hostility to the central authorities.

Inside the police headquarters, officers who had discarded their uniforms told AFP the replacement was Echem Kurci, 47, from the neighbouring town of fier.

Demonstrations have shaken Albania following the

collapse of Pyramid investment schemes in which hundreds of thousands of Albanians had put their life savings.

Amid accusation of government collusion, the opposition Socialist Party has called for early elections.

The tension in Albania has prompted Greece to step up border patrols to prevent illegal entry by Albanians fleeing the trouble and poverty in their own country.

Indian tribal guerrillas massacre 18 villagers

GUWAHATI, India (AFP) — Tribal separatist guerrillas gunned down 18 villagers after raiding an isolated hamlet in the north-eastern Indian state of Tripura, police said Wednesday.

Some 15 attackers set alight some 40 houses at Jaharul-Bachai village overnight Tuesday and opened fire with automatic weapons as the terrified villagers ran for cover, police officials said.

Sixteen people were killed instantly. Two other villagers died on their way to hospital. Jaharul-Bachai lies 25 kilometres southeast of Agartala, the capital of Tripura, a small state of three million people.

Twenty other people were injured in the attack, some seriously. The dead and

wounded included women and children. An officer said over the telephone that the victims were non-tribal Bengalis.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said a 50-year-old man lost his wife, two sons, two daughters and two grandchildren to the militants. Some 200 villagers fled their homes after the massacre.

It was the worst massacre in Tripura, which borders Bangladesh, since tribal militants gunned down 25 villagers after setting their houses on fire on Dec. 13.

The killings coincided with a visit to Tripura by Indian Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, who promised to send more federal troops to battle the rebels.

"The government should

take immediate measures to curb insurgency," Mr. Gupta said.

The minister also said India had urged Bangladesh, Burma and Bhutan not to give sanctuary to guerrillas waging ethnic and separatist wars in the country's rugged northeastern region.

"Their response is very positive," he said. "Our first priority is to solve the problem of militancy."

The United News of India (UNI) said police and paramilitary reinforcements were rushed to the massacre site to launch a massive hunt for the killers, who are known to take shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Dec. 13 massacre was blamed on the outlawed All

Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), one of a dozen groups waging a secessionist campaign which has claimed about 1,000 lives in the state.

The tribal militants also want non-tribals to quit Tripura.

Tuesday's mayhem took place despite a combing operation launched by Indian security forces in Tripura on Jan. 27 after the state's Communist government warned the rebels to surrender or face retaliatory action.

Since the government ultimatum, 140 tribal militants have surrendered to the authorities with arms and ammunition. But none of the three major groups in Tripura have agreed to a ceasefire.

Albright's Czech cousin puzzled at neglect

PRAGUE (AFP) — A Czech cousin of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who grew up with her during World War II said Wednesday she could not understand why her relative is now ignoring her.

"It doesn't interest her. I don't know why, it's a mystery," Dagmar Simova told the Czech News Agency (CTK).

Ms. Simova, 68, used to work for CTK. She and her Czech husband Vladimir live outside Prague.

Ms. Albright was born into a Jewish family in 1937 in Prague. Her father Josef Koerber, a diplomat who converted to Catholicism, fled to London with his family in 1939 to escape the Nazis.

Dagmar, whose parents died in a Nazi concentration camp, was sent to London where she spent the war years with the Koerbel family.

At the end of the war the Koerbels returned to Prague, but Dagmar and Mary — as Albright was then called — were

separated when Mr. Koerber and his family moved permanently to the United States after the 1948 Communist coup in his country.

Dagmar, who remained in Communist Czechoslovakia, eventually began working for CTK where she remained for 20 years.

At the time "Madeleine and I would send each other greeting cards," she said.

With the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia, Mrs. Albright returned to Prague in 1990 as an observer in the country's first free elections. The two women met briefly in a cafe.

In 1993, Mrs. Albright returned to Prague, but this time there was no meeting between the two cousins, Dagmar said. She said that she handed a letter to Mrs. Albright at a bodyguard at a press conference, but does not know whether it ever reached her.

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World Zaire key to

Belgian President Zaire's key to the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) lies in the hands of the Zaire government, which has been struggling to maintain its position in the region.

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Kremlin says

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2 killed, 9

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Custody law

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The custody law

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Reshuffle ahead of elections

ANTICIPATION IS rife across town that Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti will reshuffle his cabinet. The question that is being asked is "when" rather than "if" this necessary change will happen. There are increasing signs that a reshuffle will take place soon, perhaps as early as next month, rather than wait for April or beyond.

The first order of business for Mr. Kabariti, of course, is to streamline his government in time for the next parliamentary elections. Conducting the upcoming elections on the basis of the one-person, one-vote criterion promises to bring forth a more consolidated role for the Lower House this time around, since it will be the second time that deputies will be elected according to this electoral formula. This is provided, of course, that the remaining shortcomings in the current election law, which incidentally is still temporary, are rectified before the autumn polls.

The realisation of a new proportional representation system tops the list of amendments to the electoral law that awaits democratic adoption in due course, thus making it more legitimate and permanent. But conducting elections on the basis of the most equitable and contemporary standards would not guarantee constructive relations between the executive and legislative branches. The next Lower House must assert itself as an independent branch of government by making sure that the law of the land, and not the government in office, is the ultimate arbiter in determining the outcome of general elections and the make-up of parliament itself. Governmental control of, or undue influence on, these results not only tarnishes the image of parliamentary democracy in the Kingdom but also dampens widespread hopes for better ties between the three branches of government.

The majority of Jordanians believes that the executive and legislative authorities should not pursue a collision course on fundamental policy questions, nor should they do that as a matter of course. It stands to reason, therefore, that our democratic process have a truly independent Parliament that could at times challenge and at others work hand-in-hand with the executive.

This is why we all should aim from now on to conduct the fairest of elections, so that they result in an effective and streamlined cabinet as well, one that represents the majority in parliament and genuinely reflects the aspirations and interests of the people.

What Jordanians would like to see emerge from the next elections is a parliament that is not a rubber stamp for the government, but a democratic institution which can and should take initiatives and adopt systems that do serve this country and its people.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A LOT is being said nowadays about the final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis over the future of the occupied Palestinian lands, but very little is being done on the part of the Israeli government towards the attainment of the final settlement, said Ahmad Misleh, who writes for Al Ra'i. Indeed, Israel is going ahead with plans to swallow up more of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip lands in a feverish attempt to seize as much land as possible and build more settlements before the actual final-status negotiations with the Palestinians start, said the writer. He added that if Israel is not committed to respecting the interim agreements and continues to drag its feet regarding the implementation of the accords with the Palestinians, one can expect more procrastination in the implementation of the final settlement, which entails solutions for Arab Jerusalem, the Jewish settlements, the Palestinian refugees and the water resources in Palestine. He said that according to Palestinian sources, Israel has already swallowed up 60 per cent of the Palestinian lands under its control since the 1967 war and if Israel continues to delay the negotiations and the implementation of agreements, the Palestinians will be left with very little land under their control. The writer said a solution can be just and lasting only when Israel pulls out from all the Arab territories occupied since the 1967 war.

A WRITER for Al Dustour Wednesday suggested that Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti invite former Sudanese Prime Minister Al Sadeq Al Mahdi, who now leads the Sudanese opposition groups, to visit Amman and discuss the Sudanese crisis. Once here, Mr. Mahdi can brief Jordan on the actual situation in Sudan and the opposition group's views, said Saleh Qallab. The writer said that it will be useful for Jordan to listen to both sides while, at the same time, continue to support Sudan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and condemn foreign intervention in Sudan's internal affairs. Jordan, said the writer, should play a role in ending the tragedy in Sudan and ought to join hands with the United Arab Emirates to achieve that goal and save the Sudanese people further sufferings. The writer said all possible efforts should be exerted towards ending the conflict peacefully and safeguarding the national interests of Sudan.

The View from Academia

The Eid: An occasion for keeping in touch

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

THERE IS no doubt that the Eid (both Al Fitr, which comes at the end of Ramadan, and Al Adha, which comes at the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca) has many advantages. Among its several special advantages is that of keeping in touch with those whom one does not see often.

Over the past four decades in particular, our society (the Jordanian society in particular and the Arab society in general) has undergone many fundamental changes. One crucial change has to do with the dispersal and scattering of family members and relatives. Roughly before the 1960s (some would say before the fifties), members of the same family (and the family or the tribe remains until now at the heart of our social and perhaps even political structure) stuck together. They either lived in the same area or in areas nearby. They thus saw each other regularly, conducted their business together and kept constantly in touch.

Today the picture is different (remarkably in many cases). There has been, throughout the past four decades, a great deal of interest on the part of individuals in our part of the world in pursuing education (especially higher education). As a result, many of them had to move away (inside the society itself and outside it). As our society has changed from rural or nomadic to urban, many also found themselves moving away in pursuit of a living or a fulfilling career. As a result, members of the same family or group have found themselves dispersed throughout the country and abroad.

Generally, life in our society (like lives in other societies the world over) has become more complex, more demanding and significantly busier. As other societies are better at time management and at organising and managing socialisation and connections more effectively (time management and management of socialisation and connections are two serious problems in our society), many members of the same family (the close family as well as the extended family) and friends do not get the opportunity as often as they wish or as often as is necessary to keep in touch.

The Eid is a precious opportunity in this respect. It is generally conceived of (and this is one of its fundamental aims from a religious point of view) as an occasion solely devoted to visiting relatives and friends. With relatives whom one sees often and with close friends, there may be no problem. But there are many relatives and many friends whom one does not see often (even though one generally likes to see them and keep in touch). The Eid is one of the very few opportunities (along with weddings and funerals) which enables one to keep in contact with such relatives and friends.

The picture may not all be as milk and honey as is portrayed here. A great deal of effort, time, money and inconvenience are often involved. At times, the Eid raises friction among relatives who are better kept apart (at times, it removes differences and friction).

Some families in our part of the world confine their visits to a few homes; others have planned it so that most family members (especially when it comes to the extend-

ed family) will meet together at certain places and certain times (the family divan, the association, etc.). Many, however, have to visit many individual homes.

Each Eid I personally have to go to about 50 homes of relatives. I thus generally have to sacrifice my friends for the sake of relatives. Fifty houses in three days can be quite tiring, somewhat monotonous and burdensome.

I was talking to a friend the last day of the Eid and he said: "I have no energy left in me for work. I need a vacation from the Eid vacation." Taking into account that relatives are scattered all over the Kingdom, the task (may the duty) of visiting relatives is going to be quite costly money-wise, time-wise and effort-wise, especially when we know that many people do not have cars or other private means of transportation at their disposal. Being at the mercy of public transportation during the Eid is not a pleasant thing.

Despite such inconvenience and the expense and trouble that ensue, keeping in touch remains a noble end. Such realisation makes the inconvenience, expense and trouble worth it. The Eid (one may argue) is another version all at once of mother's day, father's day, sister's day, aunt's day, friend's day, etc. Had there not been an Eid, many (some of whom you really like) would lose contact and would lose the pleasure, love and psychological support that comes as a result. This would be truly regrettable in today's world which can often be alienating and lonesome.

Zaire's Mobutu — the end is drawing near

By Gwynne Dyer

THE WICKED old man has been around so long that it is hard to believe he could ever be driven from power, but it is actually happening. Kalemia, in southern Shaba province, fell to the rebels on Feb. 4. Punia and Lubutu, in the east-central region, fell at the weekend, and Isiro, in the north-east, is next. Africa's second-largest country is about to be liberated from the grip of Mobutu Sese Seko, marshal, guide and helmsman of Zaire.

"Liberated" is the correct word. This is not just another meaningless tribal squabble over who gets the loot. It is a carefully planned, highly organised campaign to wrest control of Zaire from the man who has done more harm to Africa than any other single dictator, and it is chewing up the Zairian army and its mercenary allies with admirable efficiency.

The rebels are advancing in at least four separate columns, separated by hundreds of kilometres and diverging further as they go. Against a competent oppo-

nent, this strategy would be a recipe for disaster, but against the thugs who make up the Zairian army (motto: "We loot, we rape, we flee") it makes perfectly good sense.

If the white mercenaries Mobutu has hired do not fight a lot better than they have so far, then in another week or so the rebels will capture Zaire's second- and third-biggest cities, Kisangani, in the north, and Lubumbashi, in the south. And they will not stop there.

"Mobutu has no army. His generals are mere traders whom we shall defeat across this country," said Laurent Kabila, leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), setting a deadline of Feb. 21 for Mobutu to start negotiating or face a major offensive on the capital, Kinshasa.

As usual, various parties are rushing around trying to stop the fighting. Some of them even mean well, but the French do not. Paris is pulling out all the stops to get a United Nations military intervention in Zaire,

but it is just trying to save Mobutu from the fate he so richly deserves.

So far, U.S. pressure has kept Paris from sending its own Africa-based troops into Zaire. Good. Mobutu's efforts to round up military support from other old cold war allies like Morocco and Israel have yielded no troops whatever. Even better. Because the last thing Zaire needs now is a stalemate or a ceasefire.

The best thing about the present situation is that it is quite easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys — and, for once, all the good guys are on the same side.

Laurent Kabila is no plaster saint. Anybody who has been resisting Mobutu's dictatorship since 1965 has made the occasional shabby compromise here or there. But Kabila has built up the ADLF as a multi-tribal alliance of people who are genuinely committed to saving Zaire, not just carving it up.

Kabila flirted with Marxism when he was allied to the Cubans during the 1965 uprising, but since the mid-70s he has been severely pragmatic. His

strategy has been to create small political cells in the towns and promote literacy programmes and agricultural cooperatives in liberated areas in the mountains — and there is no more talk of nationalisation. He just wants the government to get a fair price for Zaire's resources, and stop the chronic theft: "We will sell our mines to whoever can offer their services."

After 32 years of looting by Mobutu and company, Zaire is scarcely a country today. The roads generally stop a short distance out of town, and the regions pay just enough to the centre to keep Mobutu's mafia at bay. Few of the 35 million Zairians receive a proper education; even fewer have decent medical care, let alone a job. But ten years of honest government could work a miracle even in Zaire — and Kabila is backed by a coalition of other African governments that have already achieved what he is aiming at.

The ADLF's arms and training come mostly from Rwanda, where the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) drove the genocidal Hutu regime

from power two years ago. The ADLF's political model, like the RPF's, is Uganda, where Yoweri Museveni's rebels won power a decade ago on a non-tribal platform and ended 20 years of tyranny, pillage and massacre by the likes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote. Less directly involved, but offering at least moral support and perhaps military advisers to the Zairian rebels, are the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

You could not have a sharper contrast. On one side, a roll-call of east-central Africa's best second-generation governments — Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea — support the Zairian rebels (though they must deny it in public for diplomatic reasons). On the other side are African troops who would work for any regime that gives them licence to loot, and European troops who have no business being in Africa at all.

Among all the bandit armies that serve African kleptocracies, the Zairian army is rock bottom. Its soldiers rob and murder their

own fellow countrymen, but they cannot fight. And when they run away, the other troops available to fill the gaps in the line are a distinctly motley crew.

There are some hundreds of white mercenaries, many of them Serbs fresh from atrocities on the battlefields of Bosnia. France is giving undisclosed amounts of military aid (probably including some advisers) to its old protégé Mobutu. And finally there are Interahamwe militia troops who carried out the Hutu genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994, and subsequently fled into Zaire with French help.

That is an impressive array of villains, but it is not a coherent military force. What's more, the Libyan aircraft that Colonel Qadhafi promised to Mobutu have not arrived. Egypt is not sending any troops this time, and both the United States and South Africa will oppose France's attempt to save Mobutu with a U.N. force.

It may take some time, but Mobutu is a goner. One painful, bloody step after another, Africa is rescuing itself.

How the West pulls punches against its favourite demon

Iraq is expected to have the world's fastest-growing economy in 1997, although its forecast 30 per cent growth in gross domestic product will be from an extremely low base, according to a report by the London-based Economist Intelligence Unit. What may seem even more surprising to some people is that Saddam Hussein remains in power, despite all the apparent hatred poured upon him by the West.

By Richard Keeble

LONDON — Six years after U.S. jets launched Operation Desert Storm against Iraq, Saddam Hussein surprisingly remains president. Or perhaps it is not so surprising. As events unravel in the Middle East, it becomes increasingly apparent that, despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, behind the Western approach to the Iraqi leader's lies a deep desire to keep him in power.

In the 1980s, Iraq "tilted" towards the West. Responses to President Saddam from Western leaders were largely favourable as he tightened his grip on power.

The Big Bogy for the West throughout that decade was Iran. In October 1987, for example, after the U.S. had destroyed two Iranian oil rigs in the Gulf, the British right-wing tabloid newspaper, the Sun, commented: "The Americans have enough firepower in the Gulf to render the country a wasteland. Maybe that would not be a bad thing

for the rest of humanity."

In contrast, Iraq went largely unnoticed. During the 1980-1988 war with Iran, Iraq was generally referred to as either "Iraq" or "Baghdad." When President Saddam was mentioned it was often in favourable terms. His moves to privatise the economy in the mid-1980s were welcomed and he was compared to Britain's then-Premier Margaret Thatcher in this context.

Even British press coverage of the appalling chemical bombing by Iraqi jets of Kurds in Halabja in March 1988 was notable for its comparative restraint. Little blame was levelled personally at President Saddam. No Hitler jibes were made at the time.

After Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the rhetoric of politicians and media suddenly changed. President Saddam was transformed into an evil and mad monster, a global threat, a new Hitler, commander of the fourth largest army in the world, packed with battle-hardened soldiers. In reality, the army was a

rabble of demoralised conscripts weary after the eight-year war with Iran. But the politicians and media saw President Saddam a perfect enemy against whom a perfect war could be manufactured.

In particular, the U.S. elites desperately needed to win a big war to cast the traumatic defeat in Vietnam to the dustbin of history. And the West's massive military-industrial complex was desperate for a piece of the action now that the Soviet threat had dwindled.

Grenada (1983); Libya (for just 11 minutes in 1986); and Panama (1989) had all been targets for U.S. military action. But now along came President Saddam, with his nuclear and biological weapons programmes, who could easily be transformed into a "global threat" to be vanquished.

In the end, there was no real Gulf war in 1991. Instead, there was the terrible slaughter of thousands of Iraqi civilians and conscripts and the deliberate destruction of a country's infrastructure.

Paradoxically, the "war" was also in the interests of the Iraqi elite. It helped eliminate large numbers of rebellious Kurds and Shiites who have been left dissatisfied and jobless after the end of the war with Iran in 1988. And as the Western attacks caused increasing suffering in Iraq, so popular support rallied around the national hero, President Saddam.

Since 1991, the Iraqi president has flitted in and out of the Western media. "No-fly" zones have been established in the north and south of Iraq, supposedly to constrain the expansionist ambitions of the "dictator". From time to time, U.S. jets and missiles have pounded Iraqi targets, causing hundreds of deaths, while U.N.-imposed sanctions have caused appalling suffering in the country. Whatever happens, the blame has always been levelled by leading Western politicians and media at President Saddam. Yet still, somehow, he holds onto power.

Washington's support for the "dictator" is, in fact, crucial. Consider, for instance, the events of last September.

A typical "Saddam scare" erupted after Iraqi troops were reported to have invaded Kurdistan in support of the KDP Kurdish faction headed by Massoud Barzani against the Iranian-backed PUK faction headed by Jalal Talabani. Targets in southern Iraq were attacked by U.S. missiles, supposedly to "punish Saddam" for his advances in the north. Then, in the following month, the PUK faction regained its lost strong-

holds and the crisis suddenly disappeared from the media.

Behind all the simplistic anti-Saddam rhetoric, U.S. strategists were following a well-established policy: promoting a divided Kurdistan.

Significantly, this remains also the favoured policy of U.S. ally Turkey — always anxious to hinder moves towards Kurdish unity on its doorstep — and the Iraqi elite.

"One faction within the U.S. elite would like to see the Iraqi 'dictator' replaced — perhaps by another Sunni general. Another, much stronger faction pursues the traditional policy of supporting him: if nothing else, his regime currently serves as a useful bulwark against Iranian expansion."

Moreover, shortly after the Baghdad-backed assault on Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan, news of a disastrous attempt by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to build an

indigenous Kurdish force to overthrow President Saddam received prominent coverage in the West. Reports suggested that President Bill Clinton had authorised \$20 million for the covert action.

Clearly, a CIA faction was leaking the details to embarrass the anti-Saddam faction within the "company," as insiders call it. Indeed, at the heart of U.S. policy towards Iraq lie the competing interests of different factions fighting for prominence.

One faction within the U.S. elite would like to see the Iraqi "dictator" replaced — perhaps by another Sunni general. Another, much stronger faction pursues the traditional policy of supporting him: if nothing else, his regime currently serves as a useful bulwark against Iranian expansion.

Satisfying the interests of these groups is the main aim of U.S. administration strategy. Occasional risk-free missile raids satisfy both groups, just as anti-Saddam rhetoric satisfies the media's hunger for "bad guys" to howl at.

Recently, General Abdul Razzak Al Juburi, a former member of Iraq's elite Republican Guard who defected to Turkey, told British journalist Helga Graham that up to 90 per cent of the Guard would back a move to topple the president. So why is the world's only superpower so incapable of encouraging — or even bribing — a group of these rebel Guards to depose the dictator? The reply is simple. It has little desire to do so.

Gemin News Service

Wee

Nost

By Hervé Clère

L'Esprit du Pneu

LYON, France — With less than three years to go before the apocally predicted by Nostradamus take place, interest in the 16th-century prophet has never been higher.

Four hundred years after his quill first touched paper in this French city, not even the most ardent astrologist could have foreseen that his prophecies would

Ma reach

By Donald McNamee

A New York Press

WASHINGTON — After nearly 30 years of looking for the ideal wardrobe, Ronald Reagan found the answer. A shopping catalog called "The New York Press" offered him a complete wardrobe.

This is no mere catalog. Instead of listing brands and models, it lists the names of the designers who created the wardrobe. The catalog is a masterpiece of design, and it is a must-have for anyone who wants to look like a professional.

The catalog is a masterpiece of design, and it is a must-have for anyone who wants to look like a professional. It is a catalog of the best of American design, and it is a catalog that is worth the price of admission.

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The catalog is a masterpiece of design, and it is a must-have for anyone who wants to look like a professional. It is a catalog of the best of American design, and it is a catalog that is worth the price of admission.

The Arab Novel: An Introduction
By R. J. Allan
New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996, 320 pages, \$20.

"WRITING IN times of transition is what we do not know, which is why it is so difficult to write about the future and the past."

Change is the yardstick by which we measure the development of a society. It is a process that is never-ending, and it is a process that is always changing. The Arab novel is a reflection of this process, and it is a reflection of the Arab mind.

Allen addresses a number of questions in the book. How do we measure the development of a society? How do we measure the development of the Arab mind? How do we measure the development of the Arab novel?

Allen does not dispute the fact that the Arab novel is a reflection of the Arab mind. He does, however, dispute the fact that the Arab novel is a reflection of the Arab mind. He does, however, dispute the fact that the Arab novel is a reflection of the Arab mind.

Allen does not dispute the fact that the Arab novel is a reflection of the Arab mind. He does, however, dispute the fact that the Arab novel is a reflection of the Arab mind. He does, however, dispute the fact that the Arab novel is a reflection of the Arab mind.

On ergonomics and comfort

By Jean-claude Elias

IN THE LATE eighties the negative effect on pregnant women of the electromagnetic radiation emitted by computer monitors created a worldwide concern about the potential dangers of operating PCs. No direct proof was produced at that time to confirm the above allegation. Those who conducted studies on the subject never reached a clear conclusion. Most of them, however, agreed to say that if not because of the radiation itself, computers were hazardous anyway to pregnant women if only for the psychological and overall physical stress they are subjected to when working for long hours on the machines.

The issue had two positive consequences that came as a benefit not only to pregnant women but to all PC users. New computer screens are now manufactured with very strict specifications for low radiation. The level of electromagnetic radiation they emit is well below the safety line for human beings, even after six or eight hours of continuous work. From optional, luxury products a few years ago, low radiation monitors have now become the de-facto standard. Users who would stare for hours and hours at an old type monitor would regularly complain of severe headache. These symptoms seem to have been drastically reduced thanks to the low radiation models.

The second consequence of the "pregnant women" story was the sudden increased general awareness about health and ergonomic issues related to intensive computer usage. Beyond the negative effect of monitors, manufacturers and users alike started to worry about what seemed trivial before — sitting position, the shape of the keyboard, placement of the mouse and even the ambient noise generated by the PC's cooling fan and the hard disk's motor rotation.

Perhaps the question of the sitting position was the easiest to tackle. Indeed it was no different from the traditional typist's problem. In the early enthusiasm for computer technology, this obvious question had only been forgotten at the beginning. Nowadays, even if we do not always abide by the rule, we know that we need to adopt a correct sitting position — shape, height, chair — if we want to avoid backaches.

More recently Microsoft has introduced a model of "natural keyboard." Contrary to the usual straight model, it has a curved shape that is supposed to match our hands natural position and therefore reduce the fatigue that can be the

chip talk



result of long hours of typing. But whether because it is a bit too original or simply because we are not used to it yet, Microsoft's new keyboard hasn't won unanimous approval for the time being.

Perhaps the computer element that has seen the most incredible variety of designs is the mouse. Sometimes more an artist's highly creative rendition than truly functional objects, PC mice come in all shapes and colours. They can have one, two or three buttons. They can be wired or cordless. They can have curved buttons for our fingers to rest on or smooth buttons for easier sliding. They can be smooth or hard to click. They can be small or big — though they are all supposed to fit inside a human hand. There is no well defined standard for the shape of the mouse. Unlike their natural keyboard, Microsoft have a winner with their "Serial Mouse 2.0A." The simplest of them all, it has also proved in the past two or three years, that it is the most accurate, the most comfortable and the most reliable.

If questions like the monitor, the mouse, the keyboard and the way we sit to work with a PC have or are being addressed, nobody seems to do anything about the noise problem. Maybe because those who suffer from it are but a minority — those who work for long hours at night or in a quiet environment where every noise can be heard. This shouldn't make the issue less important. Noise pollution is a serious problem. It has recently been proved that many people suffer from this type of pollution without even being conscious of its cause.

Monitors, mice, keyboards and other PC components will keep improving to become even friendlier and more comfortable to work with. To better fit our human environment, PCs should also be as silent as possible. Maybe someone in the computer industry will listen.

And the spin doctors said...

By Samer Ghaleb Bageen

THEY SAID that their interests should come well before those of the people they were supposed to represent. Well, maybe they did not quite come out to say this, but the messages that they had been sending out lately to an uneasy electorate seem to indicate something to that effect, the glorification of tribalism at the expense of political maturity, and maintaining existing privileges, and skirmishes.

They said that they want to remain where they are, but we say that we can do without those familiar old faces and their same old slogans that are often about personal glory, and the glory of the tribe, rather than the glory of the nation.

Yet, and taking the long view, there are several ways of filling in the time before the next election. One is to put your head in the sand and pretend it may never happen. Another is to shrug your shoulders and say that it will not make a lot of difference — as much of the electorate seems to be doing. Another approach is to get so terribly excited that you even start speculating over what the election manifestos may be considering the recent developments.

Or, you could forget about all of this and turn to the more stimulating aspects of our lives that are of great importance to the future of our children. Take children's books for example.

These, in the past, were the products of a stable middle-class society in which the daddy, though always a shadowy figure, could be expected to have a steady job and always hang on to a pipe in his fist.

All this has now vanished. Children's writers now have no room for the loveable child because the idea of that dreamy, socially static childhood simply does not fit in a world of technological change that is, generally speaking, uncertain in its future.

Nowadays, children are seen in the light of what they are



likely to become in later life and in terms of what they are going to cost their parents. Accordingly, they are no longer allowed to indulge in simple old-fashioned games.

It is therefore becoming quite difficult to find books about happy children these days. Once upon a time, it was the children who had all the fun, while now, it is just as likely to be the adults. Add to this that the best friend in a children's book or film these days can easily be a murderer or an arsonist, and that the domination of one child by another is a recurrent theme.

Party manifestos are another thing that we can get excited about, or not. This is because it seems that well organised political parties with real grass-roots support are something that Jordan has decided it can do without.

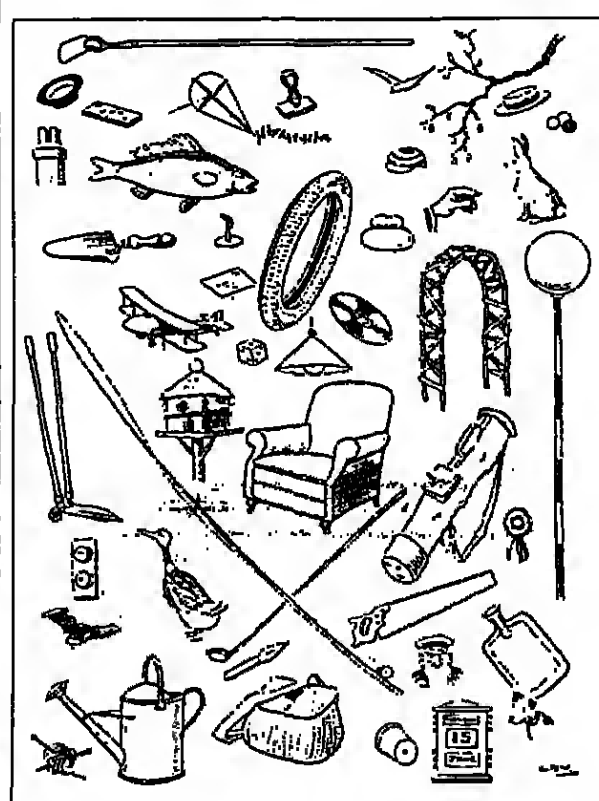
While parties around the world struggle with policies on minimum wage, the tax burden, strikes, inflation, electoral gimmicks, unemployment, schooling and pensions, we have to be content with bickering about issues that are generally of no concern to the life of the average citizen.

An average citizen that many are quite happy to assign to a silent majority whenever issues of significance arise simply because here we are on the dawn of a new century and there still isn't, in Jordan, one reliable way to measure public opinion about anything. And this is why the spin doctors will always rule.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Mohammad A. Shugair

BRUSH YOUR MEMORY



YOUR MEMORY IS GOOD IF YOU SCORE 30

There are forty-five things above. Take a brief glance, endeavouring to memorise them, then set the paper aside and write down the names of as many as you can remember.

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** Wait here until I come back.

Intazir hona hatta a'oud.

** I didn't find my servant at home.

Lam ajed khademi fil-bait.

** Phone me at 10 a.m.

It'tasil bee fil-aashira sabahan.

** What are you doing now?

Matha taf al-al-aan.

** The bottle is full of oil.

Al-zujaja malee'aton biz-zait.

** Allow me to help you carry the bag.

Esmah lee bemosa'adatika fee hami al-haqiba.

** Who has rung the bell? — Nobody.

Man daqqal jarass? — La ahad.

** I hope we can meet soon.

Amali an naltaqi qareeban.

JOKES

• FIRST WOMAN: "Why don't you want to marry, my friend?"

SECOND WOMAN: "I needn't have to. I have got a dog that growls all day, a parrot that never stops cursing and a tom-cat that spends all night outdoors."

• FORTUNE-TELLER: "You think of being married, don't you?"

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, February 13, 1997

| | |
|-------|---|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:05 | Cartoon (Ovide & The Gang & Raw Toonage) |
| 2:30 | Curiosity Show |
| 3:00 | They Came From Outer Space & N.B.A. Basketball |
| 5:00 | News Flash |
| 5:02 | Out Of This World |
| 6:00 | French Programmes |
| 7:00 | Le Journal |
| 7:15 | Magazine — Atomes Crochus |
| 7:30 | News Headlines |
| 7:35 | Parenthood |
| 8:00 | Cinema, Cinema, Cinema |
| 8:30 | Babylon-5 |
| 9:10 | Kung Fu-The Legend Continues |
| 10:00 | News In English |
| 10:25 | Feature Film — Armed & Innocent Starring: Gerald McRaney & Kate Jackson |
| 12:00 | Taratata |

Friday, February 14, 1997

| | |
|-------|--|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:05 | The Muppet Show |
| 2:15 | Playabout & Flintstones & See How They Grow |
| 3:00 | French Programme |
| 4:00 | Crystal Maze |
| 5:00 | News Flash |
| 5:02 | Science Encyclopaedia (Doc.) |
| 5:30 | French Programmes |
| 7:00 | Le Journal |
| 7:15 | Magazine — Allo La Terre |
| 7:30 | News Headlines |
| 7:35 | America's Funniest Home Videos |
| 8:00 | You Bet Your Life |
| 8:30 | Babylon 5 |
| 9:10 | Hunter |
| 10:00 | News In English |
| 10:25 | Feature Film — The Boy who Drank Too Much Starring: Scot Baio & Lance Kerwin |

Saturday, February 15, 1997

| | |
|-------|--|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:08 | Mickey & Donald Adventures |
| 2:30 | Moonin (Cartoon) |
| 3:00 | French Programme |
| 4:00 | Gillette (Sports) |
| 5:30 | Guide To The Universe (Doc.) |
| 7:00 | News Flash |
| 7:15 | Blue Heelers (Drama) |
| 7:30 | French Programme |
| 7:35 | Series — Jack |
| 8:00 | Le Journal |
| 8:30 | Magazine — Ziva |
| 9:10 | News Headlines |
| 9:15 | Hanging With Mr. Cooper |
| 10:00 | Magazine — 01 (Doc.) |
| 10:25 | Prism (Local Talk Show) |
| 11:00 | Lois & Clark — The New Adventures Of Superman |
| 12:00 | News In English |
| 12:25 | Macgyver |
| 13:00 | Feature Film — A Breed Apart — P.G.V. Starring: Rutger Hauer & Kathleen Turner |

Sunday, February 16, 1997

| | |
|------|-------------------------------|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:08 | Jonny Quest (Cartoon) |
| 2:30 | Problem Child (Cartoon) |
| 3:00 | French Programme |
| 4:00 | Global Family (Doc.) |
| 4:30 | Deep Water Haven |
| 5:00 | News Flash |
| 5:02 | Our World, Their world (Doc.) |
| 5:15 | All Our Children |
| 6:00 | French Programme |
| 7:00 | Magazine — Faut Pas Rever |
| 7:15 | Le Journal |
| 7:30 | Magazine — Sports Et Musique |

Monday, February 17, 1997

| | |
|-------|--------------------------|
| 7:30 | News Headlines |
| 7:35 | Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air |
| 8:00 | World Echo (Doc.) |
| 8:30 | Mini Series — Babylon-5 |
| 9:10 | Tycoons (Doc.) |
| 10:00 | News In English |
| 10:25 | Hot Shots |
| 11:00 | New Soap Opera (Sisters) |
| 12:00 | Yes Mister? (Comedy) |

Tuesday, February 18, 1996

| | |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:08 | Muppet Show |
| 2:30 | Captain Planet (Cartoon) |
| 3:00 | French Programmes |
| 4:00 | Nature's Inventions |
| 4:30 | Deep Water Haven |
| 5:00 | News Flash |
| 5:02 | American Chart Show |
| 5:30 | French Programme — Magazine |
| 6:00 | Science — Cinq Sur Cinq |
| 7:30 | News Headlines |
| 7:35 | Roseanne (Comedy) |
| 8:00 | Discover Magazine — Sources Of Energy |
| 8:30 | Babylon-5 (Science Fiction) |
| 9:10 | Extreme |
| 10:00 | News In English |
| 10:25 | Under Suspicion |
| 11:00 | Hunter (Police Drama) |
| 12:00 | Dad's Army (Comedy) |

Wednesday, February 19, 1997

| | |
|-------|--|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:08 | Budgie — The Little Helicopter |
| 2:30 | Flintstones |
| 3:00 | French Programme |
| 4:00 | Super Sport Follies |
| 4:30 | Dog House |
| 5:00 | News Flash |
| 5:02 | Fun With Physics |
| 5:15 | Album Show |
| 5:30 | I Love Lucy |
| 6:00 | French Programme |
| 6:15 | Series — La Lumiere Des Justes |
| 7:30 | Magazine — Extra Large |
| 7:35 | News Headlines |
| 8:00 | Murphy Brown |
| 8:30 | Super Stars Of Action — Eddie Murphy |
| 9:10 | Encounter (Local Talk Show) |
| 10:00 | Lost Civilisations — Aegean — Legacy Of Atlantis |
| 10:25 | News In English |
| 11:00 | Snowy River |
| 12:00 | Mission Impossible |

Thursday, February 20, 1997

| | |
|-------|--|
| 2:00 | Holy Koran |
| 2:08 | The Muppet Show |
| 2:30 | Cartoon (Adventures On The Rainbow Pond) |
| 3:00 | French Programme |
| 4:00 | Earth Revealed (Doc.) |
| 4:30 | Escape From Jupiter |
| 5:00 | News Flash |
| 5:02 | Challenge (Doc.) |
| 5:15 | Medicine Woman |
| 6:00 | French Programme |
| 7:00 | Document — Ushuaia |
| 7:15 | Le Journal |
| 7:30 | Magazine — Sports Et Musique |
| 7:35 | News Headlines |
| 8:00 | Grace Under Fire |
| 8:30 | Varieties |
| 9:10 | Challenges |
| 10:00 | Spencer For Hire |
| 10:25 | News In English |
| 11:00 | Cobra |
| 11:30 | Hart To Hart |

Arts & Hung

By Michael Roddy Reader

REDAIPIST — The movie industry in Hungary, a country more famous for its film-makers than its films, is getting a lift from the success of *Forrest Gump* — a story about a man with a heart of gold.

Since the film version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* was filmed in Hungary last year, people in Hungary have been more interested in the country as a film-making hub, and as a country with a rich film-making talent.

Five years ago, nobody was talking about the film industry here but now it is booming, says Gyorgy Horvath, who runs one of the country's many film studios.

Now there is great interest in our industry, our studios, even in making commercial films.

Last week, a five-minute short by 22-year-old Hungarian film student Mervyn Levy won a Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival.

And film industry sources say that *Forrest Gump* producer Andrew Apatow, who was

By Chaire Achi Reader

ABILENE, Ivory Coast — On the fringe of one of Africa's most modern cities, White House's Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck are standing with Simba the Lion King, his wicked uncle Scar and veteran Belphegor cartoon character. The film

is a veritable "Town Square" on the doorstep of Ivory Coast's commercial capital, Abidjan, a city packed with imposing administrative towers, blocks and a thriving cathedral.

The brightly painted plywood walls, which find their way into children's bedrooms or children's hospital wards, provide dozens of young artists with a way of making a living in a country where jobs are often hard to find.

Ready-made artists are not unique to Ivory Coast, the world's largest cocoa producer. They proliferate throughout Africa. But with Ivory Coast enjoying an economic upturn, the

Disaster with Dan

By Lynn El

LOS ANGELES — Bell-bottoms, conch-bell in the United States, Hollywood is delving into the disaster movies — and betting big on them.

Beginning with this weekend's *Dante's Peak*, a horde of superheros will test the limits of audience destruction.

Movie-makers are spending huge amounts of money, with the risk of box office.

"Nobody wants to make a big disaster movie," said Roger D. Perry, president, Linda Hamilton production with a tentpole in *Dante's Peak*.

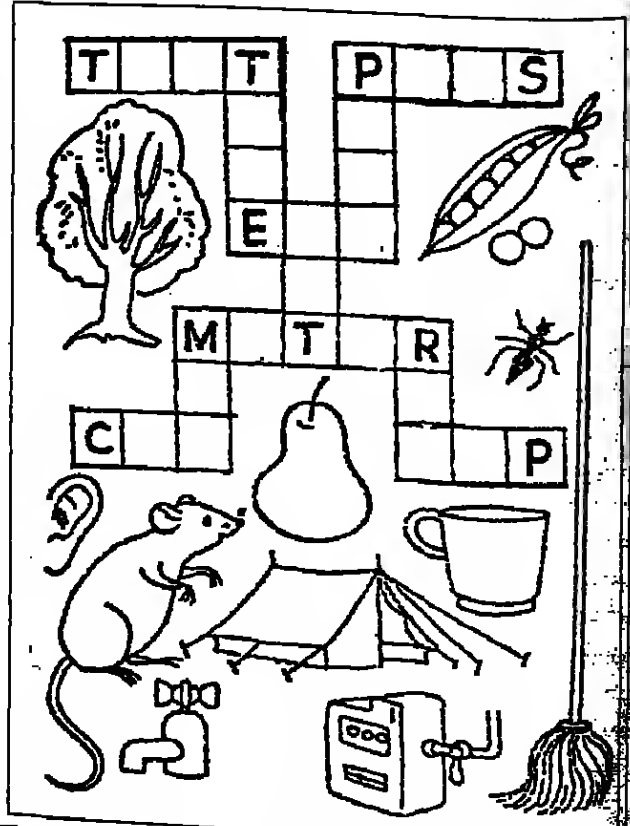
Last Spring's *Twister* was just the one that sank the Titanic, although audiences in 1997 are getting that killer ice chunk and one deadly storm.

"It is the only movie with a threat," said Mark Gordon, co-producer of *Twister* and *Twister* for a May release.

Volcano, with Tommy Lee Jones, *Twister* is planned for a face with *Dante's Peak* to be the first of the new line of disaster films, the off-told tale of the time, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Twister's Bill Paxton, will be out of even television is getting an animated *Twister* on NBC and a *Twister* on The Mountain.

While studio executives dream of the film has grossed \$242 million, a nightmare alternative: *Daylight* trapped in a tunnel film, has made good enough for 1976's *Irwin Allen's The Poseidon Adventure* and *Twister* when the stakes have been raised to advanced special effects, key to the film these days, contribute to the also are behind the resurgence of disaster movies, they thought, "oh, we're cool," said Les Bohem, who was





me to later life and in terms of what they
fulfill in simple old-fashioned games.
children these days. Once upon a time, it
who had all the fun, while now it is ma
adults. Add to this that the best friend
k on film these days can easily be a mu
ist, and that the domination of one child
current theme.

show are another thing that we can get
not. This is because it seems that well-off
parties with real grass roots support
es around the world, strikes with police,
ge, the tax burden, strikes, pollution, elec
unemployment, schooling and persons
out with buckering about issues that
no concern to the life of the average citi
citizen that many are quite happy to as
agency whenever issues of significance
are here we are near the dawn of a new
still isn't, in Jordan, one reliable way to
spoon about anything. And this is wh
will always rule.

R SIDE

GIRL: "Is there anything more you can
FATHER: "You'll certainly marry."

GIRL: "That's very good. How many are

ANK OF KNOWLEDGE

a phrases containing the word "white"

of the following are expressions? - DNB
de, cannabino, kabbie, amon, religio p
DNB

an, Columbia, District, Columbia Be
Columbia and Columbia, Re

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about?

LIVE gambling games - which end at

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Arts & Culture

By Michael Roddy
Reuter

BUDAPEST — The movie industry of Hungary, a country more famous for its filmmakers than its films, is getting a lift from the success of *Evita* — a story about Argentina with a heart of goulash.

Since the film version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical with Madonna as Argentina's Eva Peron was filmed in large part in Budapest last year, people in the Hungarian film industry say there is increased interest in Budapest as a film backdrop, and as a city teeming with filmmaking talent.

"Ten years ago nobody was even talking about the film industry here but now it is moving," said Gyorgy Horvath, who runs one of the city's many art movie houses.

"Now there is great interest in our animators, our studios, even in making commercials."

Last year, a five-minute short by 22-year-old Hungarian film student Marcell Ivany won a Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival.

And film industry sources say that *Evita* producer Andrew Vajna, who was

born in Hungary, is planning to make a film in Hungary, with Hungarian stars.

The Hungarian capital is still a long way from laying claim to the title of "Hollywood on the Danube," but there was a new sense of optimism in the industry as the 28th Hungarian Film Festival opened this weekend.

Some 25 feature films, 40 documentaries and 20 experimental films will be shown to an audience consisting of film buffs, Hungary's intellectual elite and film critics from throughout the world.

"You will see that in these five days in February, you cannot believe that so many people are interested in films," said Zsolt Kezdi-Kovacs, a director and one of the festival organisers.

"This is like many of the other 350 small film festivals around the world each year. It is an event where our films, which are not industrial products, can be shown."

As in other formerly Communist East European countries, Hungary's film industry has been hurt by the transition to a market economy, which has meant a cut in state subsidies and

forced filmmakers to become more competitive.

"There is no capital, no investment money for films in Hungary," lamented director Peter Bacso, whose new film *Gullibles And Gangsters* is being shown at the festival.

"Every director here has to be a lone wolf, finding money," he said.

But somehow enough money is coming through the pipeline so that Hungarian film production is on the rise. According to the Culture and Education Ministry, 19 new Hungarian films were shown in cinemas in 1996, compared with nine the year before.

That is a drop in the ocean compared to the hundreds of films Hollywood produces a year, but Hungary perhaps has a leg up on other East European countries when it comes to filmmaking.

Several of the big name producers or directors of Hollywood in the 1930s and '40s, among them Paramount Studio chief Adolph Zukor and directors Alexander Korda and George Cukor, were Hungarians.

Some of the world's top cinematographers, among them Vilmos Zsigmond, are Hungarians and Hungarian film schools are held in high

esteem within the industry.

Hungarian films have not generally been big hits outside of Hungary and occasionally Europe, but people in the Hungarian film industry think that could be about to change.

"People are looking now for films that are talking about something unique, where there is really something interesting in them," said movie house director Horvath. "For the last few years there have been a lot of action movies, but now everybody is waiting for a kind of Romantic turnback. It doesn't have to be something with big sets and big costumes — could just be a couple, here in Hungary."

And Director Janos Szasz, whose film *The Witman Boys* is being shown at the festival, said the involvement of people like Vajna in Hungary could give a big boost to the local industry.

"If they are making popular movies...then I think that the wave of people who are going to those kinds of films will also go to our films, which are not popular or funny, but give people something to think about," he said.



Actress Madonna is shown as she stars as Argentina's controversial and charismatic Eva Peron in Hollywood Pictures/Cinergi Pictures' *Evita* (Reuter photo)

'Toon Town' gives African artists a break

By Clotaire Achi
Reuter

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast — On the fringe of one of Africa's more modern cities, Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck rub shoulders with Simba the Lion King, his wicked Uncle Scar and veteran Belgian cartoon character Tin Tin.

It's a veritable "Toon Town" right on the doorstep of Ivory Coast's commercial capital Abidjan, a city graced with imposing administrative tower blocks and a futuristic cathedral.

The brightly painted plywood cut-outs, which find their way into children's bedrooms or children's hospital wards, provide dozens of young artists with a way of scratching a living in a continent where jobs are often hard to find.

Roadside artists are not unique to Ivory Coast, the world's largest cocoa producer. They proliferate throughout Africa.

But with Ivory Coast enjoying an economic upturn,

those on the road to the former French colonial capital and seaside town of Grand Bassam are managing to make ends meet.

"Sometimes I earn a lot, sometimes I earn a little but this is my job and I am happy with what I earn," says Prince, a roadside artist whose real name is Koua Eugene.

His cut-outs sell for 1,500 to 2,000 CFA francs (\$3 or \$4) each. They work out cheaper if you buy in bulk.

Prince, one of a string of artists on the road east out of town, employs apprentices and has helped spawn a roadside industry.

"I started doing this job 14 years ago and I have trained a lot of people, both older and youngsters. As soon as you finish training them they run their own shop," he says.

Good business

Whenever a new Disney film hits the world's screens, new faces join the collection of cartoon characters clustered either side



Esmeralda (centre) with the Hunchback in Walt Disney's animated cartoon movie *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame* (Reuter photo)

of the road to Grand Bassam, a frequent weekend

baunt for Abidjan residents — Ivorians or expatriates

alike. Pocohontas is there, so's

the Little Mermaid as well as old favourites such as

Mickey and Minnie and Donald Duck and Goofy.

The Hunchback and his Esmeralda — whose voice is that of Demi Moore in the film — are the latest arrivals, nestling among garishly painted butterflies and chunky trucks and aeroplanes modelled in wood.

"People like Walt Disney a lot and so do I. People bring along the model they want me to draw," Prince says.

His clients were initially Europeans or Americans but he says that Africans are now taking a much greater interest in his cut-outs.

"Now everybody wants them."

Antoine Kouakou, one of Prince's apprentices, welcomes the chance to earn his living in a city where many in the teeming populous suburbs turn to crime.

"It is better to earn a living from a job. Theft and aggression are not a good thing, not a job," he says.

In Zaire's capital Kinshasa, another group of artists work in wire. For them, it's a different story.

The capital of the sprawling central African country is in the grip of an economic crisis heightened by civil war in the east.

The wire, scavenged from car workshops, old fridges among other places, is worked into the shape of planes, helicopters, cars, bicycles, birds, scorpions.

Ricky, one of the wire artists, says his cars can earn him several million a day — but that is several million zaires which are worth all of 150,000 to the U.S. dollar.

"I can sell my cars and earn two to three million zaires (up to \$20) and of course it is not enough to make a living," he says. Martin Mbongo, an onlooker, agrees.

Having said that, competition is intense. "There are a lot of people who do the same things as we do," says Antoine Olomo, another artist.

But fortunately they live in a different area of the town.

Disaster film explosion begins with Dante's Peak volcano epic

By Lynn Elber
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Bell-bottom pants have made a dubious comeback in the United States. So has disco. Now, Hollywood is delving into the spirit of the 1970s with disaster movies — and betting big on the outcome.

Beginning with this weekend's debut of the volcano epic *Dante's Peak*, a horde of supercharged special-effects films will test the limits of audience fascination with mass destruction.

Movie studios are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on the genre, with the risk of their own disaster at the box office.

"Nobody wants to make a big disaster movie, a disaster disaster movie," said Roger Donaldson, who directed Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton and a digitally created mountain with a temper in *Dante's Peak*.

Last Spring's *Twister* was just the tip of the iceberg (not the one that sunk the Titanic, although there's a film about that, too). Audiences in 1997 are getting not one, but two volcanoes. That killer ice chunk and one deadly flood — so far.

"It is the only movie with a flood in it, but God only knows," said Mark Gordon, co-producer of *Flood*, which stars Morgan Freeman and Christian Slater and is planned for a May release.

Volcano, with Tommy Lee Jones caught up in a Los Angeles lava flow, is planned for spring after losing a beat race with *Dante's Peak* to be first in theatres.

Titanic, the oft-told tale of the ill-fated luxury liner, this time starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet and *Twister's* Bill Paxton, will be out in summer.

(Even television is getting in on the act. There's the miniseries *Asteroid* on NBC and the ABC movie *Volcano: Fire On The Mountain*.)

While studio executives dream of *Twister*-sized profits — the film has grossed \$242 million domestically — there's a nightmare alternative: Daylight, the Sylvester Stallone trapped-in-a-tunnel film, has made just \$32 million so far.

Good enough for 1970s Irwin Allen-produced epics such as *The Poseidon Adventure* and *Towering Inferno*, but not when the stakes have been raised by 1990s production and promotion costs that can soar to \$100 million-plus.

Advanced special effects, key to the success of any action film these days, contribute to the inflated budgets. They also are behind the resurgence of such films.

"Part of the reason all the studios went back to disaster movies is they thought, 'oh, we can really make this look cool,'" said Les Bohem, who wrote both *Daylight* and

Dante's Peak

"It's the same reason they went back to the dinosaur movie or the Martian-attack movie."

Bohem himself was sucked in by the potential for awe-some imagery after seeing a National Geographic Magazine article detailing a volcanic eruption.

"The centerfold photo was of a truck being chased by a pyroclastic cloud," he recalled. "I really wanted to go to a theatre and see that."

Such a vast, fast-moving cloud of gases, ash and rock fragments is part of the climax of *Dante's Peak*. The movie also offers up an eye-popping array of earthquakes, lava flows, boiling hot springs and acidic, flesh-dissolving lakes.

But Bohem contends that effects cannot guarantee a good movie.

"The problem has always been the bigger your disaster, the harder it is to wedge in an interesting story about interesting characters," he said. "There's a point at which the flood just washes away all your characters or it's more interesting to watch the Titanic sink than worry about who's on board."

Perhaps that's partly why some filmmakers are quick to distance themselves from the disaster pack, as with *Flood's* Gordon and his co-producer, Gary Levinsohn.

"That's one of the hardest challenges we have with the picture," Mr. Levinsohn said. "We are working incredibly hard to position it so that the first question everybody asks is not, 'there are six disaster films. How do you feel about that?'"

Ok, so why is *Flood* more than the sum of its disaster parts? "There's a great tradition of those Irwin Allen movies... but that wasn't what we were trying to do," Gordon said. "We were trying to tell a great story and set it in a flood, as opposed to saying, 'let's do a movie about a flood and try to figure out a story for it.'"

Filmmakers also may chafe at being lumped in with so-called "popcorn movies," the kind critics condemn as visually spectacular but undemanding intellectually.

No less a figure than George Lucas, however, argues that popcorn films — including his newly re-released 1977 space adventure *Star Wars* — contribute to a balanced film industry.

"Popcorn movies and the amount of revenue they've generated has allowed theatre owners to build more multiplexes, and allowed the kind of art films once shown in obscure art houses to come into the mainstream," Lucas said.

More quality dramas like *Secrets And Lies* or *Dead Man Walking* are more widely distributed now, he said, as popcorn pictures "have made the industry strong enough to be very diverse."

Indian film relives Punjab revolt

By Clarence Fernandez
Reuter

BOMBAY — A film portraying a decade-old separatist movement in India's rich northern farming state of Punjab has revived slowly-fading memories of fear and violence as voters prepare to go to the polls.

Millions of Indians are humming music from "Maachis" (Matchsticks), a film in Hindi about a young man pulled by the police torture of a friend into the vortex of an abortive independence movement which raged in Punjab in the 1980s.

The story revolves around Kirpal, a young Sikh played sensitively by freshman actor Chandrachud Singh.

Kirpal and his childhood friend Jaswant Singh's mundane farming lives are shattered when two police officers come calling in their Punjab village to ask if they are harbouring a Sikh insurgent known as Jimmy.

Jaswant is taken away for questioning, and returns two weeks later, severely wounded by police torture.

The trauma drives Kirpal underground into a shadowy group of militants.

The movie is replete with bittersweet ironies.

Sanatan, Hindu leader of a militant hit squad, seeks revenge for a brother killed in anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi in 1984 after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination by two Sikh bodyguards.

Hindu families in Punjab traditionally haphisped their eldest sons as Sikhs, under-

lining close ties between the communities that were strained by the Sikh revolt.

The ties have blurred for Sanatan, who plants a bomb in a bus packed with Hindus.

Kirpal kills one of the two police officers who tortured Jaswant, but botches a bid to get the other officer, a tough young professional who would rather be a poet than a policeman.

"In virtually every urban centre of Punjab where the film has been released, it's been declared a runaway hit," the weekly newsmagazine *Outlook* said recently.

"Highly romanticised, overflowing with lyricism... but in the end unbearably close-to-the-bone for people who actually lived through the violence, the terrorist strikes and the bloody police encounters. (it) has struck a chord."

More than 20,000 people were killed as Indian police battled to quell the bloody rebellion by Sikh religious separatists.

Gandhi was killed four months after ordering troops into the holiest Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple, to flush out militants.

State elections were held in 1992 after containing the guerrillas. But violence erupted again in 1995 when a bomb killed the state's chief minister, Beant Singh.

Bombay film producers estimate "Maachis" has earned about 28 million rupees (\$782,000) since its release 14 weeks ago.

Seven of 15 film prints were being shown in Punjab,

where it was used as a propaganda tool by the pro-separatist Akali Dal party.

But Indian political parties of both the right and the left, who fear "Maachis" will infuse new life into a dying revolt, say it glorifies terrorism. Some have demanded it be banned.

"We wanted it recast because it ends up haming the police and government on all counts, and exonerates the terrorists, showing them as Robin Hoods," said K.R. Malkani, a spokesman for the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party — which, again ironically, is allied with the Akali Dal in the Punjab polls.

Punjab was sensitised anew before Feb. 7 elections by the film's emotive imagery, he said, adding: "The government has ordered DCs (District Commissioners) to step in and ban the film if they perceive it as a law and order problem." Mr. Malkani added.

R.V. Pandit, a maverick 65-year-old publisher whose first foray into filmmaking has proved a success, said *Maachis* does not glorify the terrorists, but does just the opposite.

"Terrorism is always self-defeating. The leaders survive, but the foot soldiers lay down their lives. It has happened everywhere in the world — Palestine, Latin America, Ireland."

Indeed, towards the end, *Maachis* portrays the leader of the separatist team escaping scot-free, leaving all the rest dead.

"When I saw it I didn't

think it was biased either way," said Bombay film critic Deepa Gahlot. "It does not glorify terrorism. It does not glorify the problem a little. It didn't go back into history at all, or offer perspective. I don't blame it, because as a commercial offering, one can't expect all that."

Law enforcement officials see it with different eyes.

"Whoever film tries to add a little glamour or draw sympathy for a terrorist, is wrong," said Aftab Khan, who led the anti-terrorist squad of the Bombay police in operations against Sikh separatists working in India's commercial capital.

"I have dealt with many terrorists," Mr. Khan added. "As far as I could see, 99 per cent indulge in forms of extortion and violence because they are pure and simple criminals. Few had motivation in terms of cause or ideology."

Ms. Gahlot saw a rising trend among Indian filmmakers to cast terrorists as villains.

"Hindi films over a period of time in their own silly way tend to reflect what's happening. At one time, it was all drug dealers and gunrunners, now they're terrorists. In all now the villain is a terrorist, selling drugs over the border," she said.

Perspective and ideology apart, for film distributors the bottom line is what matters.

"This is a film for the gentry, not the masses," said one Bombay distributor who did not want to be identified. "It won't earn much, but it will be safe. Distributors will make money on it."

Traditions leave Japanese looking for American organ donors

By Yuri Kageyama
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Masanori Suzuki says a prayer of gratitude every night for the kidney transplant he received in the United States 12 years ago. "It's as though I live with an American I don't even know," said Suzuki, 54, one of the few Japanese to have had a transplant operation overseas.

Hundreds of Japanese die each year awaiting heart and liver transplants, which are routine in the United States but are not done in Japan because of laws about when death occurs and traditions regarding human remains. Only one heart transplant has been performed in this country, and that was 30 years ago. Patients can only get part of a liver from a living donor and hope it will grow in them. And only 800 kidney transplants are done a year, most from living donors, compared to more than 10,000 a year in the United States.

For Japanese in need of a heart or liver, the only glimmer of hope may come from the few organs donated at one of the four U.S. military hospitals in Japan and transplanted into Japanese patients.

"It could be the breakthrough transplant," said surgeon Hikaru Matsuda, the spokesman for 4,000 doctors who want to perform more transplant operations in Japan. "We hope it will get people thinking about why we have to turn to a foreign country."

In the past two years, at least three Japanese have received transplants of kidneys and a cornea from U.S. military donors.

The latest American organ donor was a 5-year-old boy who loved The Lion King, pizza and his rock collection.

Many surgeons hope the story of little Alex will help win over a skeptical Japanese public.

There are no laws banning transplant operations in Japan, but there is a big obstacle: The definition of death. In Japan, death is declared after the heart stops beating.

At that point, the heart and liver die quickly and cannot be used in transplants. Doctors elsewhere use machines to keep the heart of brain-dead patients beating so their organs can be donated, but Japanese doctors often will not sign death certificates for brain-dead patients.

Doctors also face strong resistance from families who don't want their loved ones cut open, even though most Japanese are cremated. Autopsies are done in criminal cases, but are not performed nearly as often in Japan as in the United States.

In addition, Japanese watchdog groups have for years filed complaints with prosecutors seeking murder charges against doctors who performed transplants. But none of the complaints have resulted in criminal charges.

Jimmy Jones, a pediatric surgeon at the U.S. Naval Hospital on the southern island of Okinawa, is working with Japanese doctors to outline procedures for future American organ donors and Japanese recipients.

Dr. Jones has already helped coordinate two successful transplants on Okinawa with organs donated from naval hospitals.

Legislation now before Japan's parliament would clearly define the rules that doctors should follow in extracting organs from brain-dead patients for transplant operations. However, a similar bill failed last year and it is not clear if this new bill has any chance of passing.

Dr. Jones has already helped coordinate two successful transplants on Okinawa with organs donated from naval hospitals.

Dr. Jones has already helped coordinate two successful transplants on Okinawa with organs donated from naval hospitals.

Bigger risks for smaller babies?

RESEARCHERS WHO found statistical evidence that there is a link between small babies and the development of coronary heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure in later life, are now to investigate whether smaller babies are more likely to develop eye diseases.

Two doctors at the Environmental Epidemiology Unit of the U.K. Medical Research Council based at Southampton University in southern England, have been given £182,000 backing by the Wellcome Trust

to investigate whether the later life risks of small babies includes eye diseases such as cataract, glaucoma and macular degeneration of the retina.

The present theory is that some diseases are "programmed" by undernutrition and poor growth before birth, but epidemiologists have been unable to provide a link with eye diseases.

Study finds day one is key to stopping smoking

CHICAGO (R) — It may be one-day-at-a-time when it comes to trying to quit smoking, but the first day is the really big one, researchers said.

A study of 207 people found that even one puff of a cigarette on the first day of trying to quit means that a smoker will probably return to the habit within six months.

"This finding contradicts the common idea that people can cheat, even just a little, and still quit smoking," said Eric Westman, lead author of the study from Duke University Medical Centre and the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Centre in North Carolina.

But of those who had not resumed smoking six months into the study only a handful had smoked on the first day.

That meant that if a person's chances of quitting smoking were one-in-four over six months, they were one-in-40 for those who took a puff of more on the first day out, the study said.

"Now that nicotine skin patches are available over the counter, many smokers are trying to use them to quit smoking on their own," Dr. Westman said. "Our study shows that while nicotine patches are an effective therapy for some smokers, others may need to include counselling and other therapies as part of their quit attempt."

More diabetes genes found

DIABETES HAS been found to involve a network of genes that was previously thought to play no role in the disease.

Data collected from one particular family by Professor Robert Turner from the Oxford Diabetes Research Laboratories proved to be the key that led to the discovery by British scientists working with research teams from the U.S., France, Denmark and Japan.

Human Genetics, said while it was now clear from their work that many genes were acting together to cause late onset diabetes, in contrast the rarer of this form of diabetes was due to the action of single genes.

The research has resulted in the identification of three types of rarer late onset diabetes, each caused by different genes. Dr. Cox explained: "The importance of this discovery is that these genes also identify a network of interacting genes which may have a role in regulating the secretion of insulin. This

Vaccine success against malaria

HUMAN VOLUNTEERS have been successfully protected against malaria by an experimental vaccine developed by a British healthcare group with U.S. collaboration.

The SmithKline Beecham (SB) group from Brentford, near London, says the clinical challenge trial was carried out at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) in Washington, USA, where three groups of volunteers received different formulations of the vaccine. Other non-vaccinated volunteers acted as a control group.

Announcing what it described as "promising clinical results," a SmithKline Beecham spokesman said in London: "The volunteers were challenged by way of infected mosquito bites with a strain of the malaria parasite called Plasmodium falciparum, which is known to be sensitive to antimalarial treatment. In the group that received the most complex formulation of the experimental vaccine, six volunteers out of seven remained free of infection. In the groups that received less complex formulations, only marginal protection

against was observed and all of the non-vaccinated volunteers became infected."

New Vitamin D compound may help fight cancer

WASHINGTON (R) — Lab experiments suggest a new synthetic Vitamin D compound may help fight cancer without the dangerous side effects associated with other forms of Vitamin D, researchers said.

The synthesised Vitamin D-5 compound inhibited cancer growth in several laboratory experiments. Further study is needed in the lab and on animals before scientists can test it in humans, cancer researcher Rajendra Mehta said.

Dr. Mehta and colleagues at the University of Illinois in Chicago reported their findings in the Feb. 5 edition of the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

The natural form of Vitamin D-3 has been shown to fight cancer in lab studies but large doses can raise blood calcium levels to dangerous, potentially fatal, levels in people.

So scientists have been looking for variants that can fight cancer without elevating calcium. Several studies are under way on variants of Vitamin D-3.

Dr. Mehta and his team, however, developed a synthesised D-5. He said in a telephone interview that he is studying whether the compound has the most potential for treating cancer, for preventing cancer, or both.

Dr. Mehta compared various doses of D-3 and D-5 in cancer cell cultures. Both of them inhibited cancer formation but D-5 did so without toxic calcium levels. In addition, he found evidence that D-5 stimulated a growth factor, transforming growth factor beta-1, believed to thwart cancer cell growth.

An editorial in the Journal by two University of California at Los Angeles cancer experts, Dr. Moray Campbell and Dr. Phillip Koeffler, said that this "entirely novel class of Vitamin D compounds" warrants more research.

ANSWERS BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. The White City; white slave traffic; "The White Devil"; White Russia; White Star Line; Cunard-White Star; "The White Company"; The white friars; the White Horse; the White House; the White Knight; the White Queen; the white rose; the white ship; White's coffee-house; a white elephant; a white lie; white magic; "the white cockade; the white feather; white wine; white ants; a white seal; the white flower of a blameless life." white meat; black and white; the White Man's burden.
2. Guncotton, cordite, TNT, lyddite, amatol, gelignite, DNT.
3. Colombia is a state in South America. The District of Columbia is the area surrounding Washington not included in any state of the USA. British Columbia is the most westerly of the provinces of Canada. Colombo is a town in Ceylon. The Columbia River flows into the Pacific Ocean through the northern USA and Canada.
4. They were the Three Wise Men who, so the Bible story runs, came from the east, following the star, to see the infant Christ. They brought him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.
5. Crown and Anchor, fantan, mora, roulette, shove-halfe-penny, pitch and toss, dicing, besides many devices at fairs which are not games.

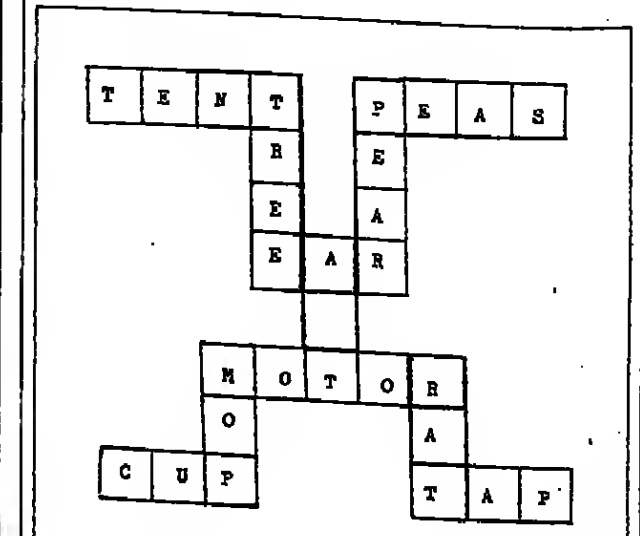
1. Keen better bet roll of ten-dollar bills on fast horses in the third race at local track.
2. How did the Eskimo of old survive on walrus, seal and fish? He got no milk, fruit or veggies.
3. Now volunteer picks out ninety-seven tickets for club's lottery pool, all with the same set of numbers!
4. What power is handed a president to veto a veto!

PUZZLES

(A) INSERT THE MISSING NUMBER

18 (The numbers at the top follow the sequence -1, +2, -3, +4; those at the bottom: 30 +1, -2, +3, -4.)

(B) FIT THE WORDS

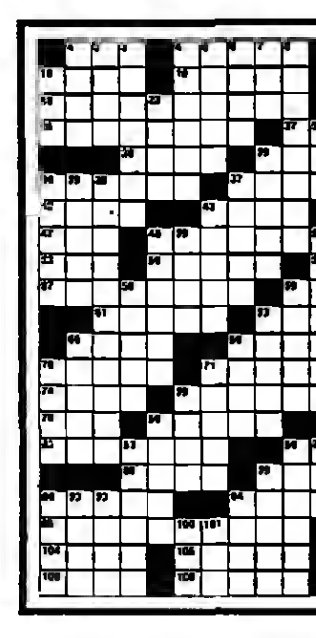


WEEKEND CROSSWORD

MANIMALS
By Diane C. Baldwin

- ACROSS
1. Contingible
 2. Count
 3. FL city
 4. Type of bread
 5. Count sharply
 6. Wife of George V
 7. Surname of film
 8. Ms. Verapago
 9. Counted
 10. Counting machine
 11. Tenth class
 12. Long time
 13. Longtime beauty
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 15. Style of dancing
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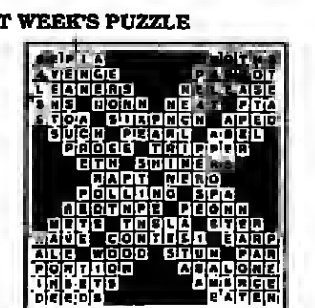
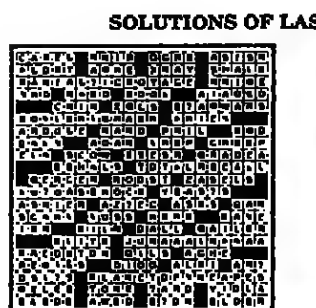


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Diagramless, 19x19
By Frances Burton

- ACROSS
1. Spog
 2. Aeron
 3. Raymond
 4. Lay up
 5. Post T.S.
 6. Vibration
 7. Decoration
 8. Scaly's neighbor
 9. Access
 10. Verapago
 11. Wolf arm
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1. Val railing
 2. Prosopis
 3. Servant
 4. Borch
 5. Agriplast
 6. Deco, abbr.
 7. Delack
 8. Stargis
 9. Tachai
 10. Bessing
 11. English chine
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Lost Week's Cryptograms

1. Kean better bet roll of ten-dollar bills on fast horses in the third race at local track.
2. How did the Eskimo of old survive on walrus, seal and fish? He got no milk, fruit or veggies.
3. Now volunteer picks out ninety-seven tickets for club's lottery pool, all with the same set of numbers!
4. What power is handed a president to veto a veto!

CRYPTOGRAMS

1. NEW SHOW SYOW TESTMOTNE NS
LIONLMUYEK LEW YD QUW DEZZWE EWWZ
QN ELI. — By Barbara J. Sager
2. MUDER SGNENRY DENT EER JEP SIBIG
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TIBBIG. — By K.C. Doyle
3. MDUNEALAZ MFRYPRRAL FMPTZTN WALK
QAFWE YFBR FOXTD QUDQFE, QUEBQUAN
MFR EX EXIT. — By Joan Wilbur
4. SYIEP MJA KNIFEDJ LNMDEM KANJLKB
HELPED NAKED NY JOE SNOWOSE: "WY
WIFAB OS HYYP WIFAB?" — By Ed Huddleson

Annexation of

(Continued from page 1)

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In his comments to French journalists interested in the Middle East, the Crown Prince reaffirmed Jordanian position on Jerusalem.

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"We are mindful of the fact that sovereignty can only be assumed by a sovereign state, and Jordan is determined that sovereignty over the Holy City should not be ceded into a legal vacuum, leaving the position of Israel paramount as an occupying power," he said.

The Crown Prince said Jordan was "invariably attached to Iraq's territorial integrity within its present borders" and said any change of government should be solely according to the will of the Iraqi people.

He added that Iraq should comply with Security Council resolutions related to the Gulf crisis and fully implement them.

In his talks with President Chirac, the Crown Prince also stressed the need for all parties to the peace process to be involved in negotiations aimed at reaching a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

President Chirac praised Jordan's role in the peace process and in reestablishing stability in the region. He also commended the role of Islam and its contributions towards European civilisation.

In his meeting with Speaker Segura, the Crown Prince stressed the need for inter-religious tolerance.

Islam is the religion of tolerance and affection, and it is regrettable and painful to see Islam being linked to violence, he said.

The Crown Prince underlined the need for the implementation of development projects as called for by the 1996 Barcelona Conference.

Mr. Segura praised the Jordanian role in supporting the peace process in the Middle East and the country's endeavour to reestablish stability in the region.

Mr. Segura stressed that France recognises Arab and Muslim contributions to the Western civilisation, agreed that Islam was a religion of peace that should not be linked to violence.

He also announced that there will be a meeting soon by presidents of parliaments in the EU and the Middle East to discuss the implementation of the Barcelona Declaration.

has already donated two organs to hospitals in the United States. The donor is a 35-year-old woman who has been donating organs to hospitals in the United States since 1994.

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News

Annexation of Jerusalem null and void

(Continued from page 1)

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In his comments to French journalists interested in the Middle East, the Crown Prince reaffirmed Jordanian position on Jerusalem.

Arab East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Arab Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967, he said, noting that international law does not permit the acquisition of territory by war and pronounces unilateral annexation inadmissible.

As such, he stated, Israel's annexation of Arab East Jerusalem is therefore null and void.

The Crown Prince reaffirmed Jordan's support for Palestinian efforts to secure political sovereignty over the city.

"We are mindful of the fact that sovereignty can only be assumed by a sovereign state, and Jordan is determined that sovereignty over the Holy City should not be ceded into a legal vacuum, leaving the position of Israel paramount as an occupying power," he said.

The Crown Prince said Jordan was "irrevocably attached to Israel's territorial integrity within its present borders" and said any change of government should be solely according to the will of the Iraqi people.

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He also announced that there will be a meeting soon by presidents of parliaments in the EU and the Middle East to discuss the implementation of the Barcelona Declaration.

The Crown Prince and Princess Sarvath were guests of honour at a dinner Tuesday night hosted by Mr. Juppe.

In a dinner speech, the Crown Prince said:

"His Majesty King Hussein exerted special efforts to put the peace process back on track and bridge the gap between the contracting parties. A firm outcome of those efforts was to ensure that agreements made between the parties concerned must be honoured irrespective of the man in charge or the party in power."

"We are mindful of the essential framework for the Middle East peace process has been restored in Hebron. Fine-tuning apart, the legitimacy of the interim autonomy accords has been acknowledged. Let us hope and pray that Hebron becomes the beacon guiding future collaborations so that progress towards our ultimate goal would be assured."

"The crisis over Hebron has indicated the desperate need for a mechanism to preempt the dire outcome of the politics of polarisation whenever the peace process stumbles."

"For our part we intend to

assist in the creative thinking for the establishment of such a mechanism so that the circle of peace may continually be expanded towards a comprehensive peace where Syria and Lebanon become full active partners in the evolving process.

The preservation of the territorial integrity of Syria and Lebanon is an imperative of the kind of peace we have always sought, and continue to demand. Moreover, the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab World have come to understand the security dilemmas of Israeli society. On their part the Israelis have to appreciate the value and importance of Palestinian national aspirations to their own security as well as to the political stability of the whole region.

"It is for this reason that we have always called for the establishment of a regional, security regime which would involve all the regional parties without exclusion and addressing all issues without exception."

The involvement of the non-Arab states including Israel would ensure the creation of a balance of power based on a diversity of interests which would safeguard the security of the smaller states. Our regional identity, requires a broader realistic definition. Just as the French people may be suspicious about greater Europe, we have our share of suspicion. Nevertheless, I agree with Mr. Juppe, that for France the Union is power and for us a regional outlook represents more stability and prosperity.

"Jordan appreciates the recent European initiatives to promote peace, security and economic development complementing the efforts of the other sponsors. For many years, Jordan has called for a comprehensive process in this field. The Barcelona framework is conceptually comprehensive. Within such a broadly defined mechanism, convergence can be achieved between the different initiatives: the Mediterranean Pact; Organisation for Cooperation in the Middle East (OCME); the NATO initiative; and the multilateral talks of the Middle East peace process itself. It may be an appropriate task for the newly established European Union special envoy to the Middle East peace process to consider. We are happy to offer every assistance to see this task to its successful conclusion."

"Let me turn to a highly significant and emotive issue: religion and the position of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Islam is a world religion and a universal civilisation. A blanket condemnation of all Muslims and the demonisation of Islam, because of the actions of a few zealots, is detrimental to the identity of Muslim communities in Europe and throughout the world. Let us always remember that, the overwhelming majority of Muslims all over the globe seek dialogue rather than confrontation; they desire understanding rather than conflict; and aim at consensus rather than polarisation."

"The status of the Holy City of Jerusalem has essentially three dimensions: political, municipal and religious-synthetic. Regarding the political dimension, our position is clear. It is based on international law. Arab East Jerusalem is an integral part of the Arab Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967. International law does not permit the acquisition of territory by war. It also pronounces unilateral annexation inadmissible. Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem is therefore null and void. Moreover, Jordan supports Palestinian efforts to obtain political sovereignty in the city. We are mindful of the fact that sovereignty can only be assumed by a sovereign state, and Jordan is determined that sovereignty over the Holy City should not be ceded into a legal vacuum leaving the position of Israel paramount as an occupying power."

"We believe that consultation is part of normal relations between states, and must be pursued more vigorously so that our quest for peace may be successful and enduring. Given good intentions on all sides, Jerusalem

may yet serve as a paradigm for tolerance, peaceful coexistence and genuine cooperation."

"Finally, I would like to address the issue of Iraq. Two essential principles guide our policy toward Iraq. We are irrevocably committed to the territorial integrity of Iraq as a sovereign independent state within its present borders. We also believe that the choice of the system of government in that country is the exclusive prerogative of the Iraqi people and no one else. Jordan is keenly conscious of the fact that Iraq must indicate its willingness to abide by the United Nations Security Council resolutions and their complete implementation. It is in the interest of Iraq, the region and the international community that Iraq should satisfy United Nations Special Commission as soon as possible on this score. The choice before Iraq is clear and we remain hopeful that Iraq will abide by the international norms of conduct so that the country is enabled to normalise its relations with the rest of the world. Iraq must declare its peaceful intentions toward its neighbours."

Mr. Juppe said in his speech at the dinner:

"You are, together with your brother, His Majesty King Hussein, one of the leaders who are most attentive to political, economic, cultural and human balance in the Middle East. Jordan is an indispensable partner there, and its voice of moderation and its wise counsel are consistently invaluable. Only a few weeks ago the prospects for peace seemed fragile. Today we can look more optimistically to the future, thanks in large measure to initiatives taken by your country."

"At a time of great tension, King Hussein brought about trust and understanding between Palestinians and Israelis."

"Jordan also contributed decisively to the long-awaited signature of the Hebron agreements."

"We know that beyond this achievement, much remains to be done before a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is established, at long last, in the Middle East. You are aware, Your Highness, of the efforts being made by the president of the French republic and under his leadership, by our diplomatic service to contribute to the peace process. This peace, as France has said time and again, is based on a number of key principles which are known to all: land-for-peace, security guarantees for all the peoples of the region — I am thinking here in particular of Israel — respect for the independence and sovereignty of states, self-determination for the Palestinians and their right to have a state."

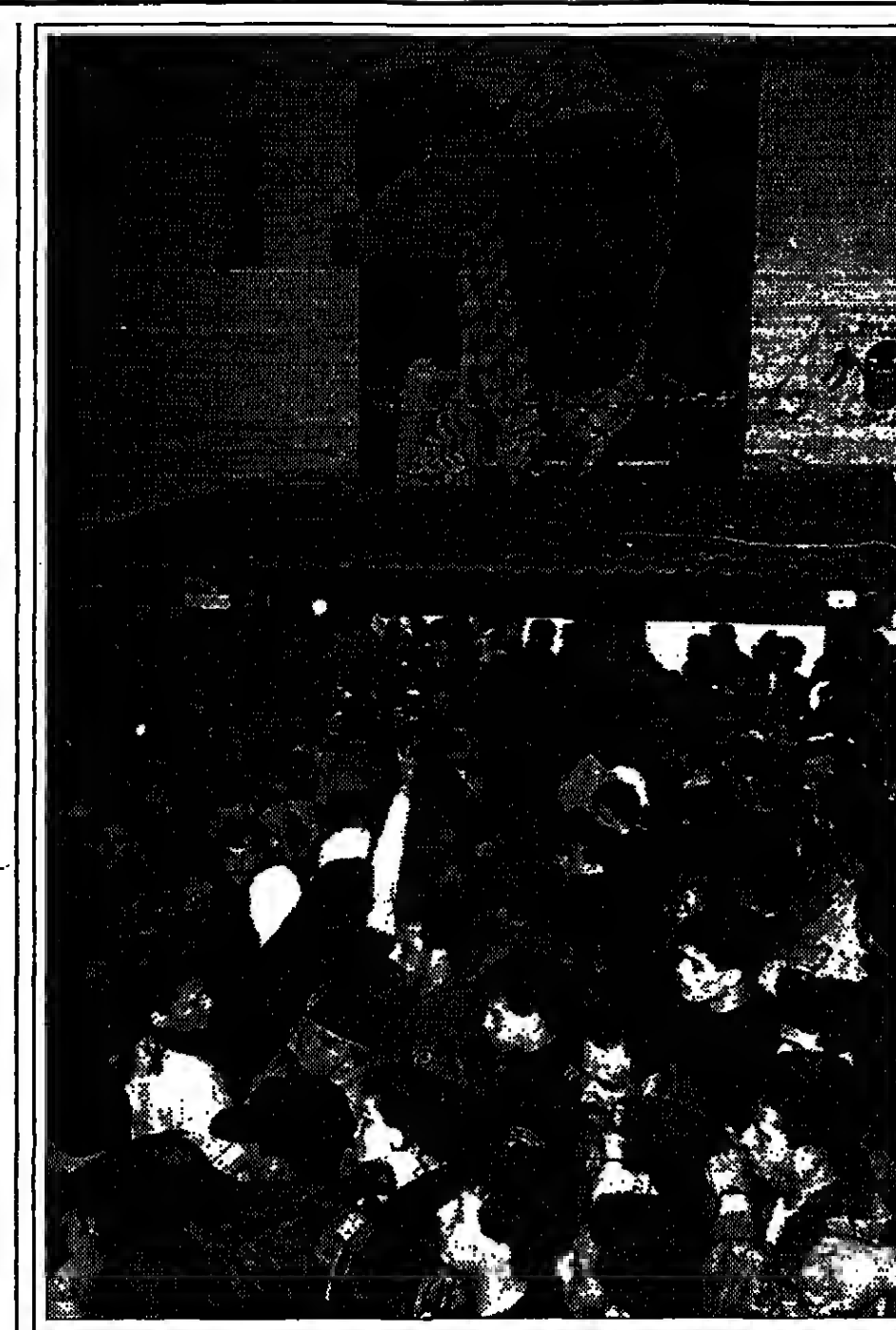
"And I do not forget the necessary quest for a just solution for the refugees, for whom your country is still generously assuming responsibility."

"We know that delicate questions remain to be solved to complete the peace process. I am thinking of the final status of the Palestinian territories. I am thinking of the future of Jerusalem. This makes dialogue and a spirit of tolerance all the more necessary. I know that Jordan, its sovereignty and you yourself, Your Highness, can always be counted on when reason, courage and heart are needed."

"Jordan is a land in which many civilisations have coexisted, overlapped, sometimes merged. The Hashemite Kingdom today retains the marks of this precious heritage; this is why Jordan is so essential to the dialogue between the Arab World and the West."

Addressing Princess Sarvath, Mr. Juppe said:

"Allow me, Madame, to pay tribute here to the exceptional work you are doing for the most vulnerable people in your country, in particular for children. I am aware of your personal involvement in the improvement of the Jordanian educational system. I also wish to pay tribute to the role you play in the many charities for which you have assumed responsibility with great efficiency and determination."



PRISONERS RELEASED: Palestinian women prisoners, one with her arm raised giving the "V" sign, pass through a cordon of Palestinian police as journalists try to photograph the women as they disembark from their bus and enter Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah early Wednesday (Reuters photo)

Allies threaten Netanyahu over Jerusalem settlement

TEL AVIV (AP) — Members of Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government threatened Wednesday to withdraw their support unless the prime minister quickly approves large-scale building projects for Jews in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Netanyahu has found himself under growing pressure from legislators in his right-wing government who believe Israel should cement its control over Arab East Jerusalem.

Talks on a final peace agreement, including the status of Jerusalem, will begin by mid-March.

The Palestinians complain that Israeli construction in Arab East Jerusalem violates the spirit of the peace accords, and predicted violent protests should there be more building.

"I believe that no one would remain calm — not from the Palestinian side, the international, Arab and Islamic communities," a senior Palestinian negotiator, Hassan Asfour, said Wednesday.

In September, Mr. Netanyahu's decision to open a new entrance to a tourist tunnel along Muslim holy sites in East Jerusalem sparked widespread

protests, including three days of gunbattles between Palestinian police and Israeli troops in which more than 80 people were killed.

Fifteen legislators of Mr. Netanyahu's 66-member coalition in the 120-member parliament met Wednesday to discuss ways to pressure Mr. Netanyahu into approving the building projects.

This would include the Har Homa neighbourhood that is to be built on Arab East Jerusalem land expropriated four years ago — two-thirds from Jewish landowners and one-third from Palestinians.

The legislators also demand more construction between the outskirts of Arab East Jerusalem and the West Bank Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim, as well as the paving of a road that would link Jerusalem with settlements to the north.

"If within one month, the prime minister does not start working on central projects in greater Jerusalem, we will no longer be able to support it (the government)," said Hanan Porat, a member of the National Religious Party.

Other lawmakers said they would vote against the government if Mr. Netanyahu did not go through with the Har Homa project.

Mr. Netanyahu apparently is concerned that Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking will collapse if he goes ahead with Har Homa. The peace process has just gotten back on track with last month's Hebron agreement, and this week's release of Palestinian women prisoners.

Princess Sarvath reviews cooperation with French Red Cross and UNESCO

PARIS (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, who is accompanying His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on a visit to France, on Wednesday visited the headquarters of the French Red Cross Society and discussed with the society's vice president cooperation between the society and the Jordan National Red Crescent Society in personnel training and spreading awareness among school children in humanitarian affairs.

The French Red Cross Society expressed its willingness to cooperate with the Jordan Red Crescent Society and support the work of its Al Hilal Hospital.

Princess Sarvath also visited the headquarters of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation UNESCO and met its Vice-President Adnan Badran to discuss (UNESCO) scholarships for Arab artists. Princess Sarvath, who is member of a special UNESCO fund set for this purpose, discussed with Dr. Badran cooperation between Jordan and UNESCO in providing special education for the handicapped and prospects of holding a regional seminar in Jordan on teaching science and mathematics. The Princess and Dr. Badran reviewed a UNESCO-sponsored school programme currently implemented in 24 Jordanian schools.

Later, Princess Sarvath held talks with the wife of French Prime Minister Alain Juppe and other leading French personalities with whom she discussed topics related to child-care and development.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope to visit Lebanon in May

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Pope John Paul II will visit Lebanon on May 11, informed sources said Wednesday. They said the Roman Catholic pontiff may spend longer in the country and could arrive May 10. The visit to Lebanon has been called off several times and was last scheduled for May 1994 but cancelled after 11 people were killed in a bomb blast in a Beirut church and because of conflicts among Lebanese Christians. In January a Lebanese member of parliament said the Pope's visit to Beirut in May would be part of a tour of the Middle East. The Christian opposition said they feared that the Pope's visit would bolster Syrian influence over Lebanon where Damascus maintains 35,000 troops.

Bahraini council members visit Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi Parliament Speaker Sadoun Hammadi received two members of Bahrain's consultative council on Wednesday in the latest sign of a warming in relations between the two countries. The official Iraqi News Agency (INA) quoted Mr. Hammadi as telling the Bahrainis he hoped "to strengthen the ties of brotherhood and cooperation between Iraq and Bahrain in various areas." Council members Ali Ben Jabr Ben Muslim and Mubammad Hassan Kamaledin brought "greetings from the brotherly people of Bahrain" and said the object of their visit was to "learn about the ordeals of the Iraqi people and to help them." In November, Iraq announced a visit by a delegation of Bahraini businessmen, which Manama categorically denied. The Bahraini embassy in Baghdad remains closed but Iraq has a diplomatic representation in Manama.

Another death sentence sought for Geagea

BEIRUT (AFP) — A Lebanese judge requested Wednesday the death sentence for former Christian warlord Samir Geagea, who is already serving two life sentences for the 1987 killing of Prime Minister Rasheed Karami. Examining Magistrate Georges Ghantous also requested death sentences for Ghassan Touma, head of the intelligence services of Mr. Geagea's disbanded Lebanese Forces militia, and his aide Ghassan Mnassa, judicial sources said. Mr. Touma and Mr. Mnassa are still at large. The indictment, which charged that Mr. Geagea was the instigator of the assassination, demanded life sentences for 12 former Lebanese Forces members and two Lebanese army officers: General Khalil Mattar and retired Major Kait Hayek. Seven others, including three army officers, who had been detained for interrogation were ordered freed for "lack of evidence," judicial sources said. An investigation was ordered to determine the identity of the person who placed a bomb in Karami's seat in an army helicopter carrying him from the northern coastal city of Tripoli to Beirut. Karami was killed in the explosion over the Mediterranean, but the pilot succeeded in landing the helicopter, saving the lives of other passengers. Mr. Geagea is serving two life sentences for the 1989 slaying of a Christian doctor, Elie Zayek, and the 1990 assassination of rival Christian leader Dany Chamoun and his family. He is also facing a trial for the 1991 assassination attempt on Interior Minister Michel Murr. Most Christian leaders consider Mr. Geagea's trials a deliberate attempt to marginalise their community, which emerged weakened from the 15-year civil war that ended in 1990.

Jordan in effort to free Yassin, Abu Marzouk

(Continued from page 1)

It said Israel's acting attorney general, Edna Arbel, refused comment on the issue.

Mr. Abu Marzouk has said he hoped, through his extradition to Israel, to gain more support for Hamas.

Hamas has carried out several attacks against Israelis that have left dozens dead, and further attacks in reprisal for an Abu Marzouk extradition could threaten the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, including the final-status talks scheduled to begin by mid-March.

Israeli security officials reportedly recommended against bringing Mr. Abu Marzouk to Israel, and Mr. Netanyahu apparently is going along with the recommendation.

In his meetings with U.S. leaders later this week, Mr. Netanyahu will request that Mr. Abu Marzouk be sent to another Middle Eastern country, not to Israel. Yediot Ahront said

ANSWERS BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

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World Bank chief economist urges government-market mix

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Former White House adviser Joseph Stiglitz, launching a new career Tuesday as World Bank chief economist, said governments should complement market forces in order to promote development.

Mr. Stiglitz, who until Monday was chairman of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers, described the World Bank as "a repository of knowledge" and said its core mission was to determine "what works and what doesn't work."

But he cautioned: "Our role is not just as a research institution... Our job is to make sure that these ideas get out to the countries, so that they can influence the policies of the countries, and that they get out to the bank to influence lending policies."

Mr. Stiglitz told reporters it was a good time for him to come to the World Bank because developing countries were becoming increasingly sympathetic to President Clinton's approach to the government-market relationship.

He said the administration had promoted an alternative both to unfettered capitalism and heavy-handed government management of the economy.

He called the approach "government as a complement to markets rather than governments replacing markets."

In an earlier study of the East Asian economic miracle, Mr. Stiglitz said he found that "government played a very vital role — but a role complementary to the market."

"Markets were at the centre and it was how governments and markets interacted that accounted for the remarkable successes in East Asia. This is an idea that is achieving increasing resonance throughout the developing world," he pointed out.

He said closing the gap between developed and developing countries constituted "the most important challenge facing the world today."

"The problems are immediate. It's clear that development is possible. The success of the East Asian countries

has shown that development is possible," Mr. Stiglitz emphasised. The World Bank in its early years, according to the new chief economist, stressed the importance of government planning mechanisms before deciding to promote trade liberalisation as the most reliable path to development.

That approach eventually gave way to the notion that macroeconomic structural adjustment held the key to success.

While both trade liberalisation and sound macroeconomic policies are essential, Mr. Stiglitz said, there are also microeconomic measures that need to be exploited.

As an example, he cited the telecommunications sector, which he said could be organised by the private sector — provided "you have the right regulatory structure to promote competition."

The bank should assist countries in efforts "to put in place environments that allow the private sector to come in and use its capital."

He also insisted on the salutary effects of competition,

pointing to "the tremendous turnaround in a number of American industries that demonstrate what can happen when firms are subjected to competition."

He pointed to the U.S. steel industry, which when no longer able to compete internationally reorganised itself into "mini-mills," smaller scale enterprises that proved to be efficient and to have spawned job growth in other domains.

None of that transformation would have taken place, according to Mr. Stiglitz, if the U.S. government had put up trade barriers to protect domestic steel manufacturers.

But he also acknowledged the painful dislocation that can accompany such reorganisations and agreed that social safety nets could not be abandoned.

"Every society has to have some form of safety net," he said. "Policies that increase the overall wealth of a nation do not necessarily increase the welfare of every member."

White House sees U.S. expansion rolling on

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. economy's nearly six-year expansion shows no signs of slowing down, with the country well placed to enjoy continued low unemployment and low inflation, the White House said.

The annual "Economic Report of the President," prepared by President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers, offered an optimistic vision of the economy.

"Our economy is stronger than it has been in decades," President Clinton said in the report's opening paragraph, setting a tone reflected in many of the 424 pages of text and tables.

Predictions of economic trends have great political import in the United States, because such calculations under the federal budget proposals that are subject to annual haggling between the Democratic president and Republican-led Congress.

The White House report found none of the classic

signs that a downturn is around the corner — financial imbalances, rising inflation, surplus inventories building up. And it argued that, unlike in years past, the United States can keep enjoying low rates of unemployment without rising inflation.

Former Council Chairman Joseph Stiglitz, without directly commenting on the current sky-high level of the U.S. stock market, suggested that financial markets reflect the "fundamental health of the U.S. economy."

"Overall, there is some degree of rational exuberance about our economy," Mr. Stiglitz told reporters in releasing the report. "Profits have been very high, the underlying fundamentals of the economy are very, very strong. Interest rates are low."

"Those factors are consistent with a strong market," he indicated.

In speaking of "rational exuberance," Mr. Stiglitz was playing on Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan's suggestion in December that there may be some "irrational exuberance" in the financial markets.

Mr. Greenspan's statement briefly knocked the stock market lower, but it has since resumed its climb and hit a string of record highs in January.

Mr. Greenspan's statement briefly knocked the stock market lower, but it has since resumed its climb and hit a string of record highs in January.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Outside fellow associates can be a great help in getting your point across today towards higher-ups who need to get as much information as possible. The evening would be fine for a discussion with an old friend.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get a troubling business matter straightened out this morning. It may behoove you to involve yourself in a community service, thereby you will gain the recognition of bigwigs and this can increase your success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There is an opportunity for expansion nearby today, however, make sure you're considering the right plan. Tend to your health needs later this evening and your loved ones will be quite pleased with your efforts.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Show more affection for your mate today and he or she

will be grateful for your attention. A small but unusual word please him or her, however, don't be extravagant. Keep "in" eyes on finances for the lean times.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Once you know what is expected of you today by your loved ones, do your best to please them. Have a chat with someone who can enlighten you in matters of the heart and you will gain the admiration of your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be sure to handle an important message smoothly this morning. Be very careful while driving on the highway or in motion of any kind, so that there won't be any difficulties which you will need to deal with in the next few days.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Don't put off annoying debtors longer — get it off the books today — kind of off your mind. You really shine romantically tonight with your mate, so don't make the mistake of neglecting any of his or her intentions.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Invite some close friends in tonight and enjoy company. Be sure your house is in good order, though, and be a charming host or hostess in treating your guests with the respect and goodwill which is necessary.

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REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

| Major Currencies & Cross Rates | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Currency | USD | DEM | GBP | CHF | JPY | CAD | ITL | NLG | FRF |
| US Dollar | 1.0000 | 1.6632 | 0.6134 | 1.4425 | 123.88 | 1.3548 | 1648.70 | 1.8899 | 5.6830 |
| DE Mark | 0.6041 | 1.0000 | 0.5363 | 0.5570 | 73.57 | 0.8044 | 978.28 | 1.1221 | 3.3746 |
| GB Sterling | 1.6303 | 2.7453 | 1.0000 | 2.3520 | 201.74 | 2.2084 | 2688.99 | 3.0805 | 9.2649 |
| CH Franc | 0.6932 | 1.1585 | 0.4248 | 1.0000 | 85.85 | 0.9387 | 1142.29 | 1.3182 | 1.3383 |
| JP Yen | 0.0081 | 1.3587 | 0.4948 | 1.1642 | 1.0000 | 1.0937 | 13.31 | 152.49 | 4.5868 |
| CAD Dollar | 0.7382 | 1.2359 | 0.4508 | 1.0568 | 1.1098 | 1.0000 | 128.20 | 155.89 | 4.7813 |
| IT Lira | 0.0006 | 1.0200 | 0.3714 | 0.8674 | 1334.22 | 0.8210 | 1.0000 | 11.45 | 3.4437 |
| NL Guilder | 0.3787 | 0.8908 | 0.3243 | 0.7532 | 68.49 | 0.7168 | 0.7778 | 1.0000 | 3.0075 |
| FR Franc | 0.1780 | 0.2981 | 0.1078 | 0.25370 | 21.76 | 0.2383 | 33.24 | 33.2400 | 1.0000 |

| Energy | | |
|--------|--------|----------|
| Oil | Last | Previous |
| Brent | 21.90 | 21.75 |
| WTI | 22.20 | 22.10 |
| Bony | 21.90 | 21.75 |
| Dubai | 19.10 | 19.38 |
| UL Gas | 201.00 | 201.00 |

| Metal Prices | | |
|-----------------|--------|--------|
| Metal | Bid | Offer |
| Gold (oz) | 337.25 | 337.75 |
| Silver (oz) | 4.83 | 4.86 |
| Platinum (oz) | 352.75 | 353.75 |
| CU (3 Months) | N/A | N/A |
| AL (3 Months) | N/A | N/A |
| ZINC (3 Months) | N/A | N/A |
| Lead (3 Months) | N/A | N/A |
| NI (3 Months) | N/A | N/A |

| Energy | | |
|---------------|-------|----------|
| Commodity | Last | Delivery |
| Coffee (c/lb) | 164.5 | Spot |
| Cocoa (c/lb) | 1269 | Spot |
| Sugar (c/lb) | 309.5 | Spot |
| Wheat (c/lb) | 132 | Spot |
| Soy (c/lb) | 22.43 | Spot |
| Tea (kg/box) | 115 | Spot |
| Barley (c/lb) | 2.17 | Spot |
| Rice (c/lb) | 470 | Spot |

| Mid-East Currencies | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Currency | USD | DEM | GBP | CHF |
| SA Riyal | 0.2658 | 0.4490 | 0.18355 | 0.38476 |
| AE Dirham | 0.2724 | 0.45778 | 0.16712 | 0.35312 |
| KW Dinar | 3.2992 | 5.65596 | 2.02347 | 4.7619 |
| BH Dinar | 0.3770 | 4.46628 | 1.62707 | 3.86049 |
| CY Pound | 1.8858 | 3.3414 | 1.2184 | 2.8632 |

| Currency Deposit Rates (Bid) | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Cncy | 1 - 3 Months | 6 - 12 Months | 1 - 3 Months | 6 - 12 Months |
| USD | 5.23 | 5.35 | 5.43 | 5.58 |
| GBP | 6.06 | 6.16 | 6.24 | 6.39 |
| JPY | 0.35 | 0.34 | 0.34 | 0.35 |
| DEM | 2.97 | 2.85 | 2.84 | 2.92 |
| FRF | 3.19 | 3.19 | 3.19 | 3.19 |
| CHF | 1.54 | 1.60 | 1.60 | 1.65 |
| ITL | 7.36 | 7.21 | 6.89 | 6.75 |

| JOD Cross Rates | | |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| Currency | Buy | Sell |
| US Dollar | 0.708 | 0.710 |
| GB Sterling | 1.1677 | 1.1638 |
| DE Mark | 0.4192 | 0.4213 |
| CH Franc | 0.29 | 0.2925 |
| FR Franc | 0.1242 | 0.1248 |
| JP Yen | 0.0087 | 0.00875 |
| NL Guilder | 0.373 | 0.3753 |
| IT Lira | 0.4254 | 0.4315 |

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1997

will be grateful for your attention. A small but unusual word please him or her, however, don't be extravagant. Keep "in" eyes on finances for the lean times.

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gain the respect which you are seeking.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Look over your property carefully today. There is an easy way to make it more valuable and comfortable for those who live under your roof. Be sure to drive carefully while on the highway to prevent difficulties.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Today is a good day to make use of your fine sense of humour, whether in business or when dealing with close friends, however, avoid sarcasm and you will get noticed by those in authority who can make you successful.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A seemingly great opportunity will present itself today, however, be on the guard for hidden strings which are attached. Enjoy your mate this evening and you will receive extra attention which will be pleasant.

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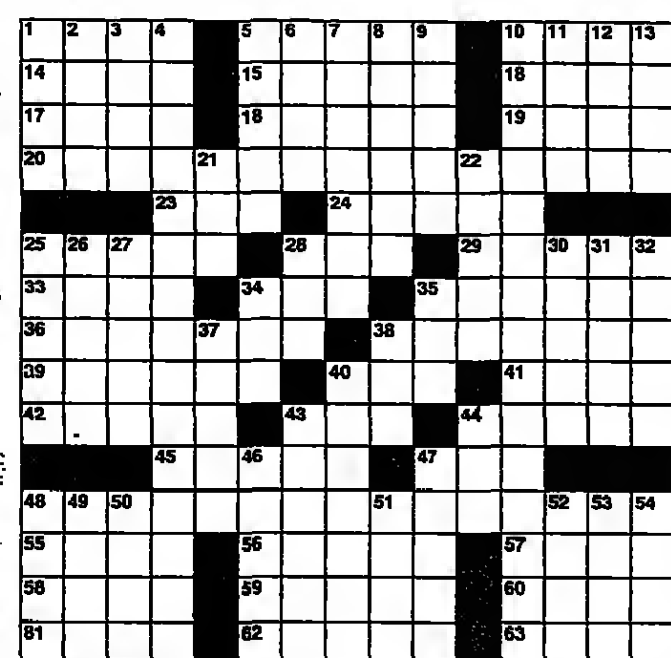
YOUR MOTHER IN LAW!



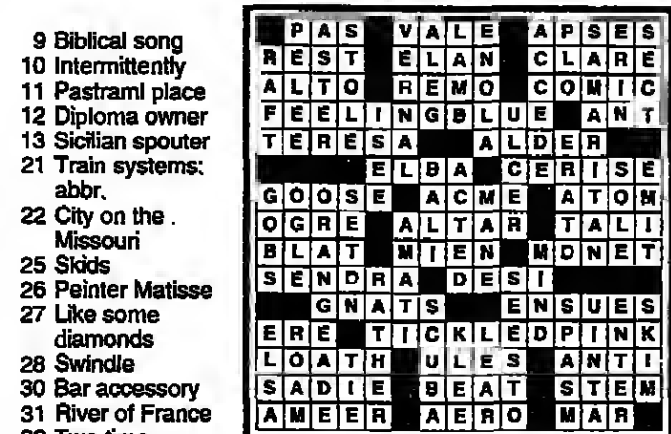
Deserves a loving present from you on
VALENTINE'S day from
DAJANI JEWELLERS!

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Kind of song
 - Amount to
 - "The — of Night" (TV soap)
 - Pocket bread
 - Salad leaves
 - Not horiz.
 - Entity
 - "I — dream..."
 - Gusto
 - AARP member's plan?
 - CA fort
 - Where a kid might ache
 - Avoids
 - Colloid
 - Frank
 - Oil or Home
 - Storm center
 - Move quickly
 - Remove a bracelet
 - Native American
 - Breaks forth
 - Scary word
 - Taj Mahal site
 - Indian lute
 - Rev the motor
 - Map feature
 - Clairvoyants
 - Youth
 - Frugal one's motto
 - Spumanti lead-in
 - Field rodents
 - Lofly
 - Paper measure
 - Observable
 - Light color
 - Go with
 - Pro votes
 - Must have



by Mary E. Brindamour



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- DOWN
- Cowboy boot feature
 - Burgundy or rose
 - Work — (try)
 - Baseball
 - Hurt
 - Mild oath
 - Fan
 - Handy
 - Biblical song
 - Intermittently
 - Pastrami place
 - Diploma owner
 - Sicilian spouter
 - Train systems: abbr.
 - City on the Missouri
 - Sticks
 - Painter Matisse
 - Like some diamonds
 - Swindle
 - Bar accessory
 - River of France
 - Two-time
 - Feminine suffix
 - The — (rock group)
 - A poem lovely as —
 - Chip off the old block
 - Moves energetically
 - Narrow furrow
 - Writer Fleming
 - Diplomat
 - Shoe forms
 - Voting area
 - On the briny
 - ERA or FBI
 - "The Way We
 - French city
 - Fictional baddie
 - Kerplunk

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make sure your abilities are noticed by superiors today, however, don't take any crazy risks. Get into community affairs later this evening and drive very carefully while on the highway to prevent accidents.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you operate in a more modern fashion today, you can add considerably to your success. Be very practical where investments are concerned. Later this evening go out on the town with close friends.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Enjoy sports with a close friend this evening, however, be sure you do something to please your mate first and avoid disagreements at all costs. Today is a good day to finish up with any current projects.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be factual and succinct today when dealing in business matters. Avoid getting into a situation which will attract attention. Later this evening will be good for discussing any course of action with a knowledgeable person.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Take some time to come to an agreement with your fellow associates concerning current career activities and you will develop a better understanding. Pay some needed attention to your health this evening and get some rest.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Take care of appointments for entertainment early today, then dive into your career activities and be efficient. Be sure to dress well this evening. Since the progress of your career could depend upon who is watching.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Don't do anything which will irritate your loved ones, handle conditions at home more seriously, and they will soon improve immensely all around. Later this evening will be good for you to take you mate out on the town.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Attend to important out-of-town communications today and you will get noticed by those in authority. Avoid any people who are very critical this evening. Handle business at home so that you can spend more time with loved ones.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Stay well within your budget tonight. Show that you are wise today, and listen to the valuable advice of an expert. Be practical with career activities so that you will gain recognition of a bigwig and become quite successful.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Take the time today to meet with an old friend you haven't seen for some time. This person later this evening, just like old time, will cheer you up. You can meet with fellow associates and decide on the best course of action.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There are many private matters which need to be handled today, so get to them. Help your loved one by organizing his or her finances and thereby you find out if there will be funds enough to handle any difficulty.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get in touch with as many friends as possible today who always work well together and make plans for recreation during the weekend. Later this evening will be good for you to seek out the advice of knowledgeable people.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx.

The Aviv (R) — The Israeli government's sale of shares in Israel Discount Bank next week will pose an important test for the Tel Aviv stock market's recovery, analysts said.

The Israeli government will be offering 17 per cent of the bank, Israel's third largest, in a package of shares and warrants worth approximately 630 million sheqels (\$180 million) at

Investors prepare to produce mag

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Israeli market faces test with Discount Bank offer

TEL AVIV (R) — The Israeli government's sale of shares in Israel Discount Bank next week will pose an important test for the Tel Aviv stock market's recovery that only began in November, analysts said.

The Israeli government will be offering 17 per cent of the bank, Israel's third largest, in a package of shares and warrants worth approximately 630 million shekels (\$189 million) at the bank's current market capitalisation.

"Six hundred thirty million shekels is a lot of money, but I think the market will be able to digest it. There's a shortage of securities," said Gidi Halperin, investments director of Meitav Investments and Securities.

Market sources noted the offer would be priced at a slight discount to the market.

The new issues market dried up in the bourse's three-year slump, which is now widely seen to have ended since share prices began a virtually non-stop ascent at the start of November.

Analysts said the market should now be strong enough to absorb the discount offering.

Only a few weeks ago, MI Holdings, the government company charged with selling the government's bank shares, was weighing an offering of attractively priced warrants — a separately priced security allowing investors to buy the shares over a period of time — because of the market's weakness.

"A failure in this (offering) would have a very negative effect on the market," said Eli Nahum, director of research of Zannex Securities. "I don't expect a failure."

About 28 per cent of the total proceeds will be from a share tranche, another 32 per cent from three-month warrants and the remainder from nine-month options, giving investors the right but not the obligation to buy the shares. Institutional investors will be entitled to bid prior to the public offering for 60 per cent of the issue.

The government successfully floated 14.5 per cent of Discount in March 1996. The bank's shares had been removed from trading on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange after the government took over most commercial banks in the wake of a 1983 bank shares crash.

To compensate for the lack of local interest in last year's offering, the government made a strong pitch to foreign investors, going so far as to conduct a roadshow in Europe. This time, however, underwriters expressed confidence local investors could carry the issue.

Gaza to get first fast food restaurant

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Gaza City will get its first American-style fast food restaurant next month when a local businessman opens a branch of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Zaki Ghali, chairman of board of the Serena Trading Company, said he had bought exclusive licensing rights to Colonel Sanders' famous fried chicken franchise for the Gaza Strip and West Bank through the chain's Cairo branch.

"We will open here during the first week of March and will inaugurate a second outlet in Bethlehem a month later," Mr. Ghali told AFP.

The restaurant, sporting Kentucky Fried Chicken's trademark red and white stripes and portrait of the white-bearded Colonel Sanders, is located on a main street near the Gaza City beachfront.

Mr. Ghali said the Cairo office of Kentucky Fried Chicken sent a team to oversee the restaurant's construction and would provide the local outlet's manager.

"This project will be a big success because Gaza is developing and our restaurant will show that it is not a small town anymore," Mr. Ghali said.

Mr. Ghali acknowledged that economic difficulties caused by the nearly year-long travel restrictions imposed on the Palestinian territories by Israel could eat into his potential clientele.

"We are trying to make our food affordable for everyone, we will try to be the cheapest restaurant in Gaza," he said, while declining to say how much his outlet would charge for its offerings.

Amoco studies Egypt gas exports to Jordan

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — U.S. oil company Amoco Corp. has signed a deal to study building a pipeline to export Egyptian gas to Jordan, Energy Minister Hashem Dabbas said Wednesday.

Dr. Dabbas said the pipeline would cross Egypt's Sinai peninsula, pass under the Red Sea and pump gas to Jordan's southern port of Aqaba, hooking up to a national gas grid which Amoco is also planning as part of the project.

"A letter of intent was signed in which Amoco will undertake a feasibility study for a pipeline to supply Egyptian gas to Jordan," Dr. Dabbas told Reuters.

Jordanian energy officials said the project, which bypasses Israel, was more feasible both economically and politically than another plan to supply Jordan and Israel with liquefied gas by tanker from the Gulf state of Qatar. That deal fell through when Israel let an

initial agreement with U.S. firm Enron Corp. lapse.

Plans to sell Egyptian gas to Israel and Jordan through a "peace pipeline" extending up the eastern Mediterranean coast to Turkey, promoted in the euphoria following Israel's 1993 self-rule agreement with the Palestinians, also faded last year when Egypt announced it would ship the gas to Turkey by tanker.

Dr. Dabbas said Egypt was now more inclined to sell gas to Jordan than the Jewish state.

"Egypt wants to export part of its gas supplies and had aspired to sell to Israel but Jordan has a priority. Egypt is ready to extend the pipeline to our border," he said.

Dr. Dabbas said it was still too early to estimate the cost of the pipeline, which officials say would be at least 300 kilometres long, or the amount of gas Jordan would require.

The gas supplies would aim to meet the demands of Jordan's fertiliser industry, major industrial concerns,

and growing needs of its power stations.

Jordan's electricity capacity is expected to reach 1,500 megawatts by the year 2000 from a present 1,100 megawatts. Fuel consumption is forecast to grow by five per cent a year.

The Jordanian officials said Amoco, which is widening its gas exploration in the Middle East, may be encouraged to move ahead with the Jordan project and other regional linkups, with prospect of rising output from its Nile Delta gas fields.

"Amoco is very enthusiastic about the project," Dr. Dabbas said. Officials said Amoco and its Belgian partner Tractebel also want to "develop, implement, invest, build and operate a pipeline system to distribute and sell gas within Jordan."

The national gas pipeline network would be for both industrial use and electricity generation.

Amoco is already involved with Jordan in plans to enhance its 30 million cubic feet per day Risha gas fields near the Iraqi border.

Jordan's electric power generation, currently run on expensive heavy fuel oil, could switch easily to cheaper gas.

They said the cost of transporting gas by pipeline would be one third of the cost of transporting it by tankers, which require expensive liquefaction and regasification terminals.

The Egypt-Jordan gas pipeline, which bypasses Israel, is a snub to the concept of Arab-Israeli cooperation, they said.

Under the new agreement signed less than two weeks ago, an 18 month period is split out from the date of the letter of intent to reach final accord on gas purchases. Amoco will complete in eight months the project's feasibility study.

However, officials said everything depended on how much Amoco would charge Jordan for the gas in what is a private venture under a Build, Operate and Own (BOO) deal.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Investors prepare to set up company to produce magnesium oxide

**** IT HAS been learnt that work is underway to set up a Jordanian company to be known as the Magnesium Oxide Company with a JD30 million capital divided over 30 million shares. The firm which will own, manage and operate the project to produce magnesium oxide, will be among other companies owned by the Jordanian Dead Sea Industries Company which was set up in 1994 as a holding company with a JD60 million to establish industries that would utilise the Dead Sea minerals.**

It is expected that investors and businessmen from Arab Gulf countries would buy shares in the company which will handle the project estimated to cost over \$89 million. The implementation of the project would take 30 months of which 24 months will be required for construction and erection works.

The plant would have an annual capacity to produce 50,000 tonnes of magnesium oxide specifically used to manufacture thermal bricks, and 10,000 tonnes of magnesium oxide and hydroxide used in the production of plastics and chemical as well as medical industries. The company expects its products to be sold at the local and international markets.

The feasibility study for the project has estimated the return on the total investment to be around 15.2 per cent and the return on the capital at 18.2 per cent (Al Aswaj).

Civil Service Commission received 15,000 employment applications in '96

**** ABOUT 15,000 employment applications were submitted to the Civil Service Commission last year. Of these applications, 4,961 were from male university graduates and 6,557 were from female university graduates. The number of those with diplomas was 2,030 males and 2,600 females while the numbers of applicants holding only the secondary high school certificate were 2,030 males and 823 females.**

The bulletin issued by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) revealed that only 1,500 persons (800 males and 699 females) left their civil service jobs last year. The bulletin said that the CSC nominated 6,000 candidates to jobs at the Ministry of Education but 3,000 of persons were actually appointed. Another 2,305 persons were nominated to work at the Ministry of Health but only 910 were appointed. At other ministries and government departments 1,081 persons were employed out of 4,893 persons nominated by the CSC.

According to the bulletin, 110 civil servants were sent to acquire masters or doctorate degrees and 6,400 persons were sent on scholarships to study in Jordan and abroad (Al Aswaj).

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

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Bill Parcells (L) smiles as he and team owner Leon Hess pose for photos, after a press conference where Parcells took the reins as the New York Jets head coach and chief of football operations at the team's Hempstead, New York headquarters (Reuters photo)

Sampras advances in San Jose

SAN JOSE (R) — Pete Sampras dispatched big-serving German Alex Radulescu 7-6 (7-3) 6-3 in the first round of the \$303,000 Sybase Open tennis tournament Tuesday.

"Alex is a very tough player," Sampras said. "He was just a couple of points from beating me in Basel last fall. He's got a big game and had nothing to lose, so I'm happy with the result."

Sampras, a California native, approached the match like a practice session, attempting just about every shot in his formidable arsenal against Radulescu, a 1996 Wimbledon quarterfinalist.

Up until the first-set tiebreak, Radulescu matched Sampras' service rockets. But ahead 3-1 in the tiebreak, Radulescu let a floating backhand return serve go by him to fall safely in the corner.

"I didn't think I could hit the volley very well. He hit it almost on the frame. It was flapping," the 62-ranked Radulescu said.

Sampras, a nine-time grand slam champion, ran off the next five points of the tiebreak, charging the

net at every opportunity. He delighted the crowd with a half-volley, backhand winner off his shoetips.

Sampras broke Radulescu in the German's first service game of the second set and never looked back.

"Against Alex, you just have to hang in there, because you know he's not going to play at such a high level all match," said Sampras, the defending champion.

"I always feel a little vulnerable in my first match, but I've played tournaments for many years, and I know that in early matches I just have to wait for my tennis to materialise."

In the other singles match Tuesday, Canada's Daniel Nestor overwhelmed Stanford University's number one player Ryan Wolters 6-0 6-1 in just 49 minutes.

Only two singles matches were played in San Jose, because seven players who will take part in eight scheduled first-round singles matches competed for their respective countries in the Davis Cup last weekend and had to fly long distances to reach San Jose.

'New-look' Pierce makes winning start

PARIS (AFP) — Mary Pierce made peace with the home fans who jeered her off the Courtin centre-court twelve months ago by scoring a straight-sets first-round victory over Sweden's plucky Asa Carlsson at the Paris open late Tuesday.

The eighth-seeded, 22-year-old French player, who upset the crowd by her grinning and general demeanour while losing to Germany's Petra Begerow in her first match here last year, was much more relaxed and businesslike against Carlsson and she needed just 67 minutes to score a 6-2, 6-3 victory.

Pierce now faces a second-round clash against Czech qualifier Adriana Gersi who earlier put out Andrea Glass of Germany 7-5, 6-0.

Finalist at last month's Australian Open and playing her first tournament since joining up with Martina Navratilova's former coach Craig Kardon, Pierce's only doubts came in the second set when she squandered a 4-1 lead.

But she calmed the nerves of her entourage in the players' box by breaking back for 5-3 and then served out for victory.

In the day's other first-round matches, Kristie Boogert of the Netherlands woo a curious three-set clash with France's Sandrine Testud 0-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) after double-faulting four times while serving for the match at 5-4 in the third.

And Boogert's seventh-seeded Brenda Schultz-McCarthy was too powerful for plucky Henrieta Nagyova of Slovakia and came back to win 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

French wildcard Anne-Gaëlle Sidot continued her recent run of successes by defeating Maria Strandlund of Sweden 6-2, 6-7, (3/7) 6-1 and Silvia Farina of Italy reached a second-round showdown with top-seeded Martina Hingis of Switzerland by beating Katerina Stutenikova of Slovakia 3-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Farina defeated Hingis here last year. Fifth-seeded Irina Spirlea of Romania scored a 6-4, 7-5 win over Elena Likhovtseva of Russia and Sabine Appelmans of Belgium defeated Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria 7-5, 6-2.

"Obviously I'm very pleased to have got through the first round and I thought the public were great," said Pierce after her win.

"I didn't think back to what happened last year. I've learned you have to take each match and each tournament as it comes."

"I liked the surface and above all I was serving well — and that makes a big difference to my game."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Tomba goes out of giant slalom

SESTRIERE (R) — Reigning champion Alberto Tomba retired from the men's giant slalom Wednesday after narrowly avoiding a fall only 30 seconds into his first race of the Alpine Skiing World Championships. The 30-year-old Italian, winner of the slalom and giant slalom at the 1996 Sierra Nevada championships, was the 16th starter on the icy Sises 2 piste. He was knocked out of the seeded group last month after failing to finish his only World Cup giant of the season in the Swiss resort of Adelboden. Six of the 15 starters before him on Wednesday had crashed out and Tomba lost his balance soon into his run. He recovered but lost a huge amount of time and, after running into further trouble, skied off the piste. Thousands of Tomba fans had made the journey to the north-western resort, gathering in the early hours with their banners and klaxons to cheer on their hero.

Sabonis to miss another week

PORTLAND (AFP) — Portland centre Arvydas Sabonis, who has been out with a bruised left calf since January 24, has not returned to practice and will be sidelined for at least another week. Sabonis, who averaged 14 points and 8.1 rebounds in 41 games, suffered the injury late in a 98-97 loss to Seattle and has missed eight National Basketball Association games. Trail Blazers' coach P.J. Carlesimo was more pessimistic about Sabonis being back soon, saying, "we haven't even talked about when he can come back to practice, much less play." Sabonis, 32, averaged 14.5 points and 8.1 rebounds last season in his first NBA campaign. 97

Stich out of Marseille event

MARSEILLE (AFP) — Czech Republic's Daniel Vacek caused the shock of the day at the ATP event here on Tuesday when he knocked out Germany's third-seeded Michael Stich 6-4, 6-2. Stich, a runner-up at the French Open at Roland Garros last year, had no luck this time on French soil, despite taking a 4-1 lead in the first set. However in view of recent poor results — a first round loss at Doha, and a second round loss in the Australian Open — Stich's defeat is less of a surprise. However for world number 74 Vacek, it was a welcome further success in Marseille following his final appearance against Boris Becker of Germany in 1995.

Vialli in talks with Saints

SOUTHAMPTON (AFP) — Unsettled Chelsea striker Gianluca Vialli could be on his way to Premiership rivals Southampton after holding talks with Graeme Souness here on Wednesday. The former Juventus captain had a working breakfast with Southampton manager Souness, his old friend from their playing days at Sampdoria, and the two are believed to have discussed details of a possible move. The 32-year-old Italian international has lost his first-team place at Chelsea to Mark Hughes and criticised his manager Ruud Gullit for leaving him out. The fee for Vialli is understood to be three million pounds (about \$4.8 million) and his wages at Chelsea, where he arrived on a free transfer from Juventus in the summer, are believed to be 25,000 pounds a week.

Players strike at Belgian soccer club

BRUSSELS (R) — Players at Belgian Second Division soccer club Beerschot collectively hung up their boots on Tuesday after not being paid since October. The players were promised payment last month but the money has yet to materialise. The management of the club, which is 14th in the division with 22 points from 22 games, promised to rectify the situation as soon as possible. The players set a deadline of Tuesday morning and when no one from the management turned up, decided to go on strike.

Thern to accept Rangers offer

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Sweden captain Jonas Thern Tuesday told Swedish paper Expressen it would be hard to refuse the financial offer from Glasgow Rangers. The 29-year-old Roma player, who has made up his mind to leave Italy, said he would have to combine the wages offered by Benfica, Napoli and Roma together to reach the sum proposed by Glasgow. Still according to Expressen, Glasgow have offered Thern a minimum of two years and maximum of a three-year contract worth 10 million Swedish crowns (about 835,000 pounds) a year. Thern would leave on a free transfer from Roma at the end of the season.

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Wiberg aims to win World Cup title

SESTRIERE (R) — Pernilla Wiberg's best chance of salvaging her Sestriere Alpine Skiing World Championships hopes seems to lie now with Thursday's combined event.

The world and Olympic champion arrived in Italy as the golden girl, winner of two titles in 1996 to go with the three other golds she has gathered in her career, and on course to become the first Swedish woman to win the overall World Cup title.

In Sierra Nevada last year, her all-round performance won her a car as the best skier on the slopes.

It has all gone horribly wrong in Sestriere, where Wiberg has been struggling to overcome sickness.

Winner of the slalom last year, she crashed out of that discipline last week and followed that by finishing sixth in the giant, suffering from a cold and losing a ski pole.

She was only seventh in Tuesday's super-giant slalom.

"These World Championships are pretty disappointing for me," she said, in case any one had any doubts, after a couple of mistakes cost her all hope of a Super-G medal.

With just two races left, she needs to take a medal in either the combined or Saturday's downhill.

Otherwise she will be heading home to Monte Carlo without a gold from a major event for the first time.

Until now she has won at least one in every Olympics or World Championships she has entered since 1991.

She has never won any other colour of medal.

The downhill looks a long shot, although she has made it her major target since she has never won one before.

The combined is another story. Wiberg won the only world cup event held this season in Laax on February 2.

Hilde Gerg of Germany was second and Anita Wachter of Austria was third. They will again be her major rivals along with Austrian Renate Goetschl in an event that combines a

downhill with a night slalom.

The diminutive Wachter, in her seventh championships, may well prove the bigger threat of the two since she too is looking to salvage something from the wreckage.

Fifth in the event in 1987 and 1989, third in 1993 and second in 1996, the 1988 Olympic combined gold medallist dreams of taking the final step up the world podium.

Before Sestriere, Wachter who was 30 on Wednesday, seemed committed to going on to the 1988 winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Now she is not so sure.

Disappointment or success in Sestriere could tip the balance either way as far as her career is concerned.

Gerg, dubbed "Wilde Hilde" by the German media, will also be fired up after finishing third for the first medal of her promising career in Tuesday's Super-G.

Other contenders will be less well-known names such as Norwegians Trude Gimle or Ingeborg Helen-Marken. Switzerland's promising Catherine Borghi or German Sibylle Brunner.

One thing most of them can be reasonably positive about is that the host nation, whose skiers have won the first three women's races, will not come up with yet another winner.

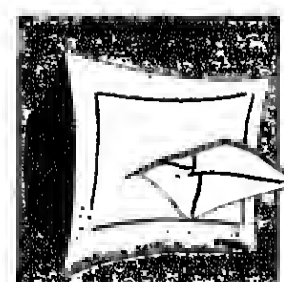
Morena Gallizio finished sixth in the Laax combined but has otherwise posed no threat this season.

The best combined finish an Italian woman has achieved at major Alpine events in the past half century was a third place by Giuliana Minuzzo in the 1956 Olympics in the days when it was a paper victory before separate races were created.

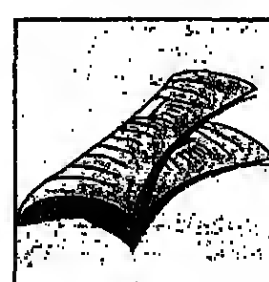
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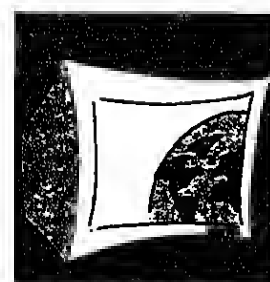
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Little sign of breakthrough in Lima crisis

LIMA (AFP) — Leftist rebels holding 72 high-profile hostages and demanding that their jailed comrades be freed have agreed to keep talking with Peru's government.

But no date was immediately set Wednesday for more talks.

As the potentially explosive standoff at the Japanese ambassador's residence here entered its ninth week, Roli Rojas, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) guerrilla unit's second-in-command, met for four hours Tuesday face-to-face with the government point man in the crisis, Domingo Palermo.

The talks stretched from the afternoon into the evening in a pastel orange, two-storey private house across the street from the rebel-held Japanese residence.

Mr. Rojas used a direct line to speak several times during the talks with top MRTA leader Nestor Cerpa in the residence, the newspaper El Comercio reported.

But there was no surprise deal to end the standoff. The MRTA guerrillas are demanding freedom for some 440 of their jailed comrades-in-arms, an idea President Alberto Fujimori repeatedly has rejected out of hand.

"There will be no release of MRTA hostages. That is final," Mr. Fujimori said in an interview with Le Monde. The talks aim "to convince the MRTA they won't achieve anything, neither privileges nor concessions, because they took hostages," he said.

The rebels also want changes in the government's belt-tightening economic policies. Joining Mr. Rojas and Mr. Palermo were dialogue guarantors Juan Luis Cipriani, the archbishop of Ayacucho and a friend of the president; Michel Minnig of the International Red Cross;

Vincent, a former MRTA hostage; and Japan's ambassador to Mexico, Teruaki Terada.

The only remarks after the eight-hour talks by Archbishop Cipriani and Mr. Vincent were that the sides had agreed on some procedural matters, and to keep talking at a date to be fixed.

"It's not an easy job, but I do have hope that a good outcome will be reached," U.S. Ambassador to Peru Dennis Jett told the daily Expresso. The United States has kept a low profile in the crisis, in public deference to Japan, Peru's top source of foreign aid.

In Tokyo on Wednesday, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto flatly rejected speculation by Mr. Fujimori that ransoms may have been paid for Japanese hostages being held.

"No money was paid," Mr. Hashimoto told reporters at his official residence. "I do not know why he said such things."

At a meeting with Japanese media at a London hotel on Tuesday, Mr. Fujimori said he suspected "Japanese companies and families of hostages may have paid ransoms" to the MRTA gunmen who have held the Japanese residence since Dec. 17.

"The MRTA has made it a custom to threaten hostages' families and companies and get ransoms. If they do not take payments, the MRTA kills hostages," Jiji Press quoted Mr. Fujimori as saying.

But he stressed: "It is the Peruvian government's policy not to accept ransom demands." If Japanese companies pay ransoms to the hostage takers, "it will be very bad for the security of Japanese businessmen in the future. So, I send out a stern warning against their ransom payment," Mr. Fujimori also said, according to Kyodo News.

Uday footage seeks to counter rumours

BAHDAH (Agencies) — Aiming to dispel reports that President Saddam Hussein's eldest son was paralysed in his left side after an assassination attempt, Iraqi television has broadcast footage of Uday Hussein moving his left arm.

The seven-minute clip aired late Tuesday on Al Shabab Television showed Uday ribbing his chin with his left hand and making points in a conversation by counting them on the hand. Uday owns the television station.

Uday has been hospitalised since unidentified gunmen shot him several times on Dec. 12 while he was in his car in an upscale Baghdad suburb.

Police reportedly detained hundreds of people for questioning after the attack, but the gunmen have not been found.

Dissidents have called the shooting a blow to the regime of President Saddam, which has increasingly relied on close family members for support.

Iraqi television has repeatedly broadcast footage showing Uday, and Iraqi dissidents have suggested that he was partially paralysed based on the appearances, in which he has not been seen moving his left arm or left leg.

Last month, a senior U.S. military official in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Uday may be paralysed and could lose a leg to gangrene.

The television showed Uday wearing a white hospital robe and sitting in a chair with his barefoot left leg stretched and his right leg bent. He was not shown moving his legs.

In one clip, Uday was shown slowly moving his

left arm as he received three government ministers.

Uday met with ministers and other Iraqi officials who greeted him on the 'Eid Al Fitr holiday.

"Eid was observed from Saturday through Monday. It was the second time in a week that the 33-year-old Uday appeared on television in a wheelchair."

Iraqi sources in Amman said a Cuban medical team led by President Fidel Castro's personal doctor is in Baghdad treating Uday.

France and other countries have turned down a request to receive the Iraqi leader's son for treatment. Uday was hit by 14 bullets.

Crackdown on traders
The Iraqi opposition said Wednesday that the Iraqi authorities have arrested 84 merchants for allegedly extorting state funds.

"Eighty-four merchants in Baghdad, including Saad Tabra, were arrested last week," the Iraqi National Congress (INC) opposition coalition said in a statement. The London-based INC said the Iraqi presidency "has prepared lists of names of other merchants and wealthy Iraqi businessmen ... and the dictatorial regime is ready to carry out additional arrests."

The U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq since August 1990 has ruined most Iraqis, and some merchants have taken advantage of the embargo by raising prices.

The "oil-for-food" agreement that went into force Dec. 11 allows Baghdad to sell \$2 billion of crude oil in six months in order to buy food and medicine and pay war reparations. All under strict U.N. supervision.

Palestinians move to reopen Hebron market

HEBRON (AFP) — Palestinian authorities took the first steps Wednesday towards reopening Hebron's main wholesale vegetable market, three years after Israel closed the bazaar following the massacre in a nearby mosque of 30 Palestinians by a Jewish settler, officials said.

Merchants opened up nine stalls Wednesday morning with the permission of Palestinian municipal authorities and officials from Israel's military administration who toured the area, located next to a Jewish settler enclave, officials said.

The shopowners said they had been given permission to begin repairs and other preparations for resuming business, but no trading was yet taking place.

Officials denied earlier reports that formal authorisation had been given to resume business in market, as called for under a Jan. 15 agreement which turned most of Hebron over to the control of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

"Today we sent city engineers with members of the Israeli liaison committee to see what repairs and other work are needed in the market as a first step to returning to business," Hebron Mayor Mustapha Nasseh told AFP. Army spokesman Peter Lerner confirmed the market was slated for a return to full activities under the terms of the January agreement. But



Palestinians saw off the locks on their stores in Hebron on Tuesday as Israel, implementing another part of the autonomy agreement, allowed the reopened part of the produce market that has been closed for nearly three years (Reuters photo)

he said no firm date for the move had yet been set.

Many Palestinians flocked to the market to watch the sudden activity on Wednesday, while settlers from the nearby enclave stayed away.

The army closed the market and an adjacent street in

February 1994 for fear that Palestinians would attack Jewish settlers there in the aftermath of the killing of 30 worshippers in the Ibrahim Mosque.

The Palestinians were gunned down by a local Jewish settler, Baruch Goldstein, who was lynched

by the crowd. The shooting sparked widespread violence in Palestinian areas.

Earlier this month the army opened a first section of Hebron's Shuhada Street to Palestinian taxis and municipal vehicles. The rest of the street is to be gradually opened to Palestinian traf-

fic over the next three months.

Israel withdrew its troops from 80 per cent of Hebron and banded civilian control over the entire city to the Jan. 17. Israeli troops remain behind in the other 20 per cent to guard some 450 militant Jewish settlers.

Syria said ready to allow exiled Brothers to return

CAIRO (AFP) — Syria's President Hafez Al Assad will allow exiled Muslim fundamentalist leaders to return if they admit they were wrong to oppose his government in the 1980s, a senior Syrian religious figure said Wednesday.

Mohammad Saad Ramadan Al Bouti, who is close to Mr. Assad, said they could return to Syria after "the Brotherhood's leadership issues a statement admitting its errant behaviour in the 1980s and their complete satisfaction with the policies carried out today by Syria."

"I think that's the position of President Hafez Al Assad and all the other Syrian leaders and citizens," he said in remarks published in the Arabic newspaper Al Hayat.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in 1980 launched an armed battle against the government, which ended in the deaths of up to 25,000 people in the Muslim fundamentalist stronghold of Hama. Hundreds of Muslim Brothers fled abroad.

Mr. Bouti, whom Al Hayat said had met Mr. Assad several times, also said the Muslim Brothers who return "must not create a political party."

He said there were "various trends among the Muslim Brothers now, some of which favour such a statement while others oppose it."

The religious official also said he was sure that "sooner or later an amnesty will be granted" to the Muslim Brothers in prison, "because I know very well that President Assad favours it."

"I can't set a date ... but we all expect that the amnesty will take place soon," said Mr. Bouti. More than a year ago, Mr. Assad granted an amnesty to hundreds of Muslim Brothers.

9 nationalist centrist parties plan merger, could be strongest group

By Khalil Shobaki
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Nine Jordanian nationalist and centrist political parties have made significant headway towards merging into a national centrist party that could become a major political bloc, party sources said Wednesday.

The sources told the Jordan Times that the parties held intense negotiations in the past two months on common denominators vis-a-vis many issues and political stands.

According to the sources, the meeting involved the secretaries general Abdul

Hadi Majali of Al Ahd Party, Suleiman Arar of Al Mustaqbal Party, Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh of Al Yaqatha Party, Mijhem Khreisha of Tajamou Party, Hakam Kheir of Al Watan Party, Anis Mutasheer of Al Waed Party and Ali Saad of the Progress and Justice Party. Mr. Saad also represents the Al Jamaheer and Unionist parties.

These nine parties want to finalise the merger before the next general elections, which, according to the Constitution, will take place in November 1997, and want to field candidates on a unified list.

One committee charged

with drawing up the basic principles of the proposed unified party and another with drafting the party's internal regulations.

The sources said, "an unspecified transitional period will precede the full merger among the nine parties after which the unified party members will elect the new leadership during a general conference."

According to the sources, the nine secretaries general have affirmed their determination to give up their leadership positions to ensure the success of the experiment and open the way for the new leadership.

An initial reading of a

draft document on the proposed merger indicates that the parties are serious.

If the effort proves to be successful the merger will create the largest political party in terms of numbers and influence.

Several political parties have unsuccessfully tried to merge in the past. Several leftist parties succeeded last year into merging into a unified party grouping the Socialist Democratic Party, the Democratic Arab Party and the Jordanian Democratic Party which together formed what came to be known as the Unionist Democratic Party.

Lebanon protests to truce panel over Israeli air strikes

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon lodged a protest Wednesday with the committee monitoring a ceasefire in southern Lebanon over Israeli air raids a day earlier that wounded a Lebanese civilian.

The protest came as Israeli jets flew across Lebanese air space for a second day to stage mock strikes on positions of a Palestinian group south of Beirut, police said.

Israeli warplanes flew at low altitude Wednesday over a base of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) in Lebanon, but did not open fire, police said.

A government official said Lebanon had complained over the "wounding of a shepherd, the killing of 35 goats and the damaging of houses in Nabatieh," near the eastern city of Baalbek in an Israeli air strike on Tuesday.

Tuesday's strike destroyed the antenna of the Voice of the Oppressed radio station run by the Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrilla movement from the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley.

The shepherd was identified as 40-year-old Murhej Solh. The Lebanese complaint also cited "damage of a number of houses in Lucy," during an Israeli air raid on Palestinian positions just five kilometres from the Syrian border.

Three guerrillas of Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-GC were wounded in the strike.

The Israeli air force had also on Tuesday struck positions of the PFLP-GC in Naameh, 15 kilometres South of Beirut but no guerrillas were injured in that attack.

The government official said the five-nation ceasefire committee will discuss the Lebanese complaint during a session on Monday requested by Israel to deal with an Israeli protest filed on Friday.

Israel lodged the complaint after the discovery of five bombs it says were planted in its self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon by Hizbollah guerrillas.

The Israeli military conducted controlled explosions to detonate the bombs.

The monitoring committee — made up of France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States — was created by an April 26 truce accord.

The agreement, which ended a 17-day Israeli against Hizbollah in South Lebanon in 1996, calls on both sides to avoid targeting civilians in their on-going conflict or launching attacks from civilian areas.

The Israeli army established the "security zone" in South Lebanon in 1985 ostensibly to protect its northern communities from attack by the guerrilla groups.

Iran says Sudan asked for military assistance

TEHRAN (Agencies) — President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said Wednesday that Iran is reviewing a request from Sudan for military equipment to fight an opposition offensive launched last month.

"They have asked us for help and we are examining their request," Mr. Rafsanjani told a press conference. "We have close cooperation with Sudan and if we help them, no one should complain."

But the president stressed that any military assistance to Khartoum would not be free of charge.

"This is not really aid. We may be paid in cash or in credit. We have in the past provided humanitarian assistance in the form of oil or foodstuff," said Mr. Rafsanjani.

During a visit to Tehran two weeks ago, Sudanese Vice-President Ali Zuhair Mohammad Saleh denied his country received military or financial assistance from Iran.

He was responding to reports from the Sudanese opposition that Iran has airlifted tanks and chemical weapons to Khartoum.

Mr. Rafsanjani also denied any air link between the Islamic republic and Sudan for the delivery of arms. "We have not been sending any such goods to Sudan recently," he said.

Iran regards the Sudanese government of Omar Al Bashir as a bulwark of resistance against U.S. influence in northern Africa.

An official Sudan newspaper said on Wednesday that Eritrean opposition forces have killed at least 100 Sudanese rebels in an attack

on their camp in Eritrea. Sudan accuses Eritrea of allying with Sudanese rebels in attacks along Sudan's eastern border. Eritrea denies it.

The report on Wednesday in Al Inqaz Al Watani was the latest in the government-owned daily of attacks on forces opposed to Khartoum. It could not be independently confirmed.

"The Eritrean opposition launched an attack on the Haykota camp which belongs to the elements of Sudanese saboteurs in Eritrea, causing the deaths of more than 100 of these elements," the newspaper said.

It did not give a date for the attack but said it took place after differences developed between mostly northern members of Sudan's opposition and the main southern opposition party, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) led by John Garang.

It reported that as a result of the differences which it did not specify, the Eritrean authorities who supervised the camp withdrew weapons from both sides, giving the Eritrean opposition the chance to launch its attack.

The newspaper did not name the Eritrean opposition group which launched the attack, but in a report on Tuesday it said the opposition Eritrean Liberation Front had dealt "strong blows" to Eritrean forces in attacks which it said took place last month near the border with Sudan. The newspaper last week said the Eritrean opposition had killed 189 fighters belonging to the ruling Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the SPLA.

Indian prisoners stage 'chilli powder getaway'

CALCUTTA (AFP) — Three prisoners staged an Indian-style getaway by throwing chilli powder into the faces of their police guards, officials said Wednesday. A police spokesman said the three men, one a convicted murderer, temporarily blinded the guards with the powder before jumping out of a police van taking them to a Calcutta court Tuesday. They were then picked up by three motorbikes following the van before escaping through the packed traffic. Police Superintendent B.D. Sharma said the police guards were being investigated for negligence.

Former police officer Runu Guha Noyogi said he had heard of a similar "chilli powder getaway" in the city more than 20 years ago. "In 1973, seven prisoners escaped in Calcutta in similar circumstances," he said. He added chilli powder was often used, however, by muggers and bag snatchers to blind their victims. The Alipore central jail authorities, meanwhile, argued they should not be blamed for the escape, stressing that uncut chillies rather than powder was used in their kitchen.

Concorde tickets for just £10
LONDON (R) — British Airways said it had sold 190 Concorde tickets for only 10 pounds (\$16) each in 30 minutes, as 20 million people phoned its sales centre hoping to be among the lucky few. The return tickets for flights on the luxury aircraft between London's Heathrow airport and New York were offered at a £5,400 discount to mark the 10th anniversary of BA's privatisation.

Tortoise takes a breather through its backside
BRISBANE (R) — Australian scientists said they were studying a rare freshwater tortoise which breathes through its bottom when underwater and through its mouth when on land. The rheodytes leukops, commonly known as the Fitzroy river tortoise, breathes oxygen through special gills lining its rear passage (cloaca), enabling it to stay under water longer, said zoologist Craig Franklin from the University of Queensland. Franklin said the unique breathing technique enabled the tortoise to stay underwater for up to five hours, compared with the maximum two hours for other tortoise species.

Shuttle to carry Irish golf pennant
DUBLIN (R) — The Coats of arms of some of Ireland's best-known golf courses are to be blasted into space. The next U.S. space shuttle will be taking a pennant of the south West of Ireland Golf Company with it, carried by Jim Halsell, an astronaut of Irish descent. The pennant features the heraldic emblems of nine major championship golf courses including Ballyunion, where U.S. President Bill Clinton says he is determined to play. The shuttle Columbia, which takes off on a scientific mission on April 3, will also be carrying a medallion featuring a 19th century Irish emigrant ship, the Jeanie Johnston. It never lost a passenger in 16 voyages from Tralee to Baltimore, New York and Quebec during the Irish famine when more than a million people left for new lives in the "new world."

Israelis favour free

THE AVIATION... Ash... who killed... following the release... women held for anti Is... published Friday... Ash... who killed... following the release... women held for anti Is... published Friday... Ash... who killed... following the release... women held for anti Is... published Friday...

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